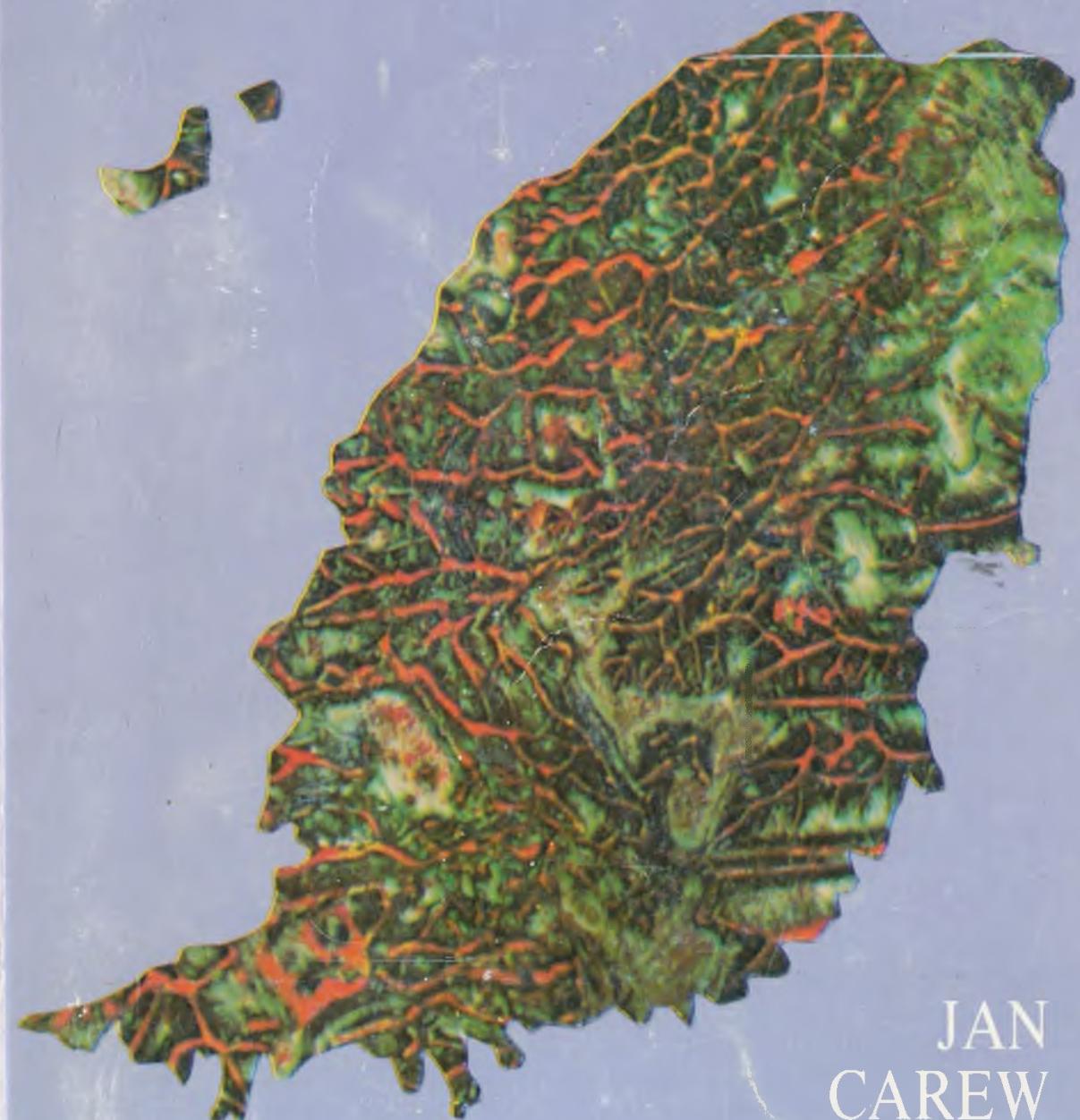


# grenada

THE HOUR WILL STRIKE AGAIN



JAN  
CAREW



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For Joy, Shantoba, Sheila, Anne, Beverly,  
Maureen, Alice, Zella – women who hold  
up two thirds of the sky in the name of peace,  
justice and the liberation of all peoples.

This book is dedicated to those fighting for  
the liberation of Grenada, and for the men  
and women who died in that struggle in 1654,  
1796, 1983 . . . The hour will strike again  
and new heroes and heroines will arise as  
Kaierouanne had done, as Fedon, Netta  
and Gamay had done, as Bishop had  
done–others will pick up the fallen  
standards . . .

# GRENADE

THE HOUR WILL STRIKE AGAIN

JAN CAREW

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## INTRODUCTION TO JAN CAREW'S BOOK

*Historians, like journalists, are not immune from national, racial and class biases. It is not surprising that most surviving accounts of slave revolts in the Americas, peasant revolts in medieval Europe and working-class uprisings in the capitalist world come from men utterly devoid of sympathy with the rebels' causes.*

*Colonial historians who wrote most of the available recorded history of the Caribbean, including Grenada, cherished the view that if they could only get into official archives, have access to government documents then they would be on firm scholastic ground. All too many of them who believed they were being "objective" were merely ignoring the distorting lenses through which they observed past history. It is easier for many present day academics to enter into the mode of thought of a bureaucrat in 18th Century imperial England than it is for him to imagine how the slaves of the Caribbean lived, felt and thought.*

*Christopher Hill, a distinguished history professor at Oxford University, observed in a recent essay that history has to be rewritten in every generation because new bits of experience in the present open our eyes to questions posed in the past. If history has any use, he says, it is deepening our awareness of the process by which society sets major questions that men and women have to answer, questions that did not originate abstractly in men's minds but come out of their political and social experiences.*

*The good historian must question the assumptions of the past and of previous historians. He must question his own assumptions and prejudices and he must force the past to yield up the questions that were being asked, the problems that were being set as they were experienced by the people who lived in the period he is studying. The good historian must think the thoughts of the past and the broader his sympathies the more he is likely to succeed in this imaginative task.*

*Jan Carew, outstanding Caribbean historian, journalist and essayist has taken up this task in this book and he has succeeded. He has written a better history of Grenada than most who have tried before cause his sympathies are with the people of this Caribbean nation and with their struggles past and*

present. He has written a "popular" history of Grenada about and for the people of Grenada, the Caribbean and the world, the colonial peoples who Frantz Fanon called "the wretched of the earth" or as Carew himself prefers to call the "neglected people" sharing a fate of silence and "historical amnesia" at the hands of imperial historians, who so deliberately and wantonly misinformed us of our past and thus kept us ignorant about ourselves.

Carew has thus set himself the job of making visible the unseen and audible the unheard. He has thrust himself imaginatively into the society about which he writes accomplishing the difficult job of reconstructing the questions from the recorded answers and from the oral tradition, the "collective pool of memory". Using creative and original narrative and dialogue he has not only "novelised" his main historical characters but has in the process identified questions that seem new to us because they approximate the questions the real men and women of Grenada, the "salt of the earth" were posing and answering over the past four centuries.

There is a latitude in Carew's historical imagination that does not stretch it beyond credibility. He vividly portrays Christopher Columbus not as a romantic seafarer but as a colossal liar, the first colonizer who set the precedent for centuries of colonial domination in the Caribbean, for the rule of institutionalized lying. He treats Julian Fedon not as a rebel without a cause, as colonial historians have tended to do, but as a freedom-fighter with a strategic perspective one who was greatly influenced by the French Revolution, by Robespierre and his Jacobins and by the Paris Commune.

Carew's is not only a history of Grenada but a history in microcosm of the entire colonial and neo-colonial Caribbean. His historicism is partial and aligned with the victims of colonialism and imperialism. He makes no pretenses at being clinically "objective". He takes a side and, as he should, makes no apology for it. His guiding principle is to always respect and reproduce as accurately and creatively as possible the objective historical realities of colonial and neo-colonial Grenada.

This book is replete with implicit and explicit historical parallels, repetitions and lessons that span and interconnect the 17th, 18th, 19th and 20th century realities of our Americas. With great specificity it also traces the continuity throughout these centuries of the Grenadian peoples' revolutionary struggles against imperial indignities. Carew's methodology links the past with the present.

The inter-imperialist conflicts and rivalries for Caribbean and Latin American colonies of yesteryear continue today in the competition among the Western powers for "spheres of influence", for markets and sources of raw materials in this and other regions of the globe.

*The farce of so-called pluralistic democracy that exists today in post-invasion Grenada in a bourgeois parliament whose representatives defend and advance the interests of capital over those of the working people is akin to the caricature of "representative democracy" in late 18th century Grenada which meant that the "people's assembly" was elected by the 1 ½ % of the adult population which was sufficiently propertied.*

*The uncanny similarity between the military action mounted against Julian Fedon from Barbados in the late 18th century and the October 1983 United States invasion of Grenada, also mounted from Barbados, is one of the many historical parallels cited by Carew through this book.*

*In a sharp indictment of cultural imperialism, he notes that there is more historical material on Grenada in France and Britain than there is in Grenada itself. I remember the late Prime Minister Maurice Bishop describing how he spent many hours in the British Museum and London's public libraries while a student there in the 1960's researching everything available on Fedon and laboriously copying by hand into a notebook every word he read. Two decades later when Bishop paid a state visit to France he signed a cultural agreement with the French Government that would have permitted the transfer to Grenada from Parisian archives of several documents rich in historical value related to the Fedon revolt and the Treaty of Versailles.*

*I recall Bishop's keen appreciation and understanding of the importance of historical record keeping. His constant admonitions to his aides to record and store every development, big or small, of the Grenada Revolution; his own library and voluminous files, papers and diaries — all attest to his recognition that as a sovereign and truly independent people we bore the responsibility to ourselves and to posterity to systematically record our history.*

*Of course, today all of these files, records and papers are in the archives of the US Government, captured during the invasion of Grenada. This vast body of historical documentation, the property of the Grenadian people, stolen during the imperialist plunder of October 1983 will probably never be returned to its rightful owners because imperialism understands their value and potentialities.*

*In a recent CIA publication containing some of the stolen material entitled "The Grenada Papers", editors Seabury and McDougall state in their foreword and introduction that the American invasion "yielded a treasure trove of captured documents depicting the inner workings of the People's Revolutionary Government", and that the papers are "historically unique and will be mined by scholars (bourgeois American scholars, no doubt) of various disciplines for many years to come".*

*This only underscores Carew's poignant statement that "a people who find*

*out too many truths about themselves and their past struggles against colonialism and slavery might confront neo-colonial rulers and their imperialist sponsors with a new resolution and courage."*

One wonders whether the current neo-colonial puppet regime of Herbert Blaize will dare to allow Corew's history book into the classrooms of the present-day Grenadian school system.

Among the challenges confronting progressive and revolutionary Caribbean historians like Jan Carew, Cheddi Jagan, George Lamming, James Millett, Richard Hart and others is to write the history of our region in a manner that clearly and creatively demonstrates how history is the result of the dialectical interaction of objective and subjective factors, regarding them as but two forms of the manifestation of one and the same historical process.

People act in accordance with historical necessity. This is true of Fedon, Butler, Bishop, Martí, Sandino, Fidel and other great leaders of Caribbean and Latin American mass movements but their will, consciousness and organization exert a tremendous influence not only on the forms but also on the tempo and results of the mass movement.

The objective factors are prerequisites for activity which do not depend on the consciousness of the subjects of action. They ultimately determine the general trend of history and the main essence of people's activity.

The subjective factors, on the other hand, are a reflection of the objective prerequisites of activity in the consciousness of the subjects — makers of history — and the formation on that basis of will, energy, conscientiousness and organisation necessary to solve the social tasks posed by history.

The task of our people's historians is to show how the objective laws of social reality are the laws of the activity of the masses themselves, the laws of their own social actions and consequently these laws cannot either emerge or function outside their activity.

There is nothing that can happen by itself in history, automatically by force of economic or historical necessity. The Grenada Revolution did not triumph on March 13, 1979 only because the objective material conditions were favourable at that time for radical change but because they coalesced at a particular historical juncture with the subjective will and desire of the Grenadian masses for revolutionary change and the ability and preparedness of Maurice Bishop's New Jewel Movement to ignite and realize the masses' aspirations.

The subjective factor appears or is created in order to realize the possibilities and solve the tasks posed by social development. But there is no present harmony, no absolute correspondence in history. This is why there have been cases in history when the maturity of objective prerequisites for social trans-

formations were present but the subjective factor capable of actualising a revolutionary transformation was lacking at a given moment. In such cases, the movement of history is retarded and the vital tasks posed by history remain unresolved.

Indeed, it can be argued that the rapid deterioration in the material conditions of the Grenadian masses after almost two years of imperialist occupation has created a potentially revolutionary situation in objective terms not unlike that which existed in the last days of Gairy's misrule prior to March 1979.

But today, unlike 1979, the subjective factors in the form of occupying troops, a revolutionary vanguard party still in its initial stages of development and a lingering collective trauma among the masses caused by the horrors of October 1983 are not sufficiently mature for radical transformation and resumption of progressive historical development.

In the dialectical interaction of objective and subjective factors the latter are always secondary and derivative but do in turn influence, transform and change objective conditions and relations and along with them "create" new laws. In the course of transformation the subjective factor does not remain immutable, it also changes.

It is therefore the cardinal task of the new, emerging Caribbean historicism to illustrate how men and women are at the same time both authors and actors of their own historical processes and how the bourgeois concepts of fatalism and voluntarism are organically alien to a scientific treatment of history.

For centuries, the Grenadian people were torn from their history until March 13 1979 when with the triumph of their Revolution they reentered it as authors and actors. Four and one half years later with the brutal murder by ultra left extremists of Maurice Bishop, Unison Whiteman and other martyrs which facilitated the criminal US invasion one week after the Grenadian people were once again robbed of their sovereign right to chart their own historical course.

This book is by no means a complete or exhaustive history of the Grenada Revolution but concentrates more on Grenada's pre-1979 developments. Writing the full, detailed people's history of the Grenada Revolution remains an unfulfilled task for progressive Caribbean historians and journalists.

Carew's book, however, is a glowing tribute to that jewel of a Revolution and to all of Grenada's heroes and martyrs, from Fedon to Bishop. The shining example of the Revolution and its leader, Maurice Bishop, will endure in the memories of progressive humanity and will continue to inspire millions of oppressed and exploited peoples all over the world to struggle tirelessly for

*a free and happy future, for peace, national independence, social progress, democracy and socialism.*

*The International Organization of Journalists, (I. O. J.) representing 200,000 progressive and democratic journalists in over 100 countries is pleased and proud to publish this book and to collaborate with Professor Jan Carew on this and other projects.*

*We hope we have made a modest contribution to his efforts and the efforts of others to bring to world attention relevant aspects of Grenada's history. We believe it will help to counter present imperialist campaigns of misinformation designed to confuse and distract public knowledge about Grenada and to erase from the collective memory and the historical record centuries of struggles and achievements of this small but valiant people. We are convinced that truth crushed to the earth will one day rise again and that soon a new day will dawn on a once again free Grenada.*

*Don Rojas  
Secretary of the IOJ  
and former press secretary  
to the late Prime Minister  
Maurice Bishop*

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## PREFACE

*Not the princes and prelates  
And perriwigged charioteers  
riding triumphantly laurelled  
to lap the fat of the years;  
Rather the scorned, the rejected  
The men hemmed in with the spears,  
The men of the tattered battalion  
That fights till it dies.*

John Masefield.

The imperial powers: Spain, France, Holland, England, and much later, Denmark (which slipped in to dance to the tune of settlement and conquest), played a political game of musical chairs in the Caribbean archipelago for centuries. The history of that imperial game has been well-recorded and yet, reading it, one learns very little about the Caribbean people. Those neglected people, like countless millions in the Third World who share the same fate of silence and historical amnesia at the hands of imperial historians, are treated very consistently as though they were anonymous extensions of Euro-U.S.A. civilization.

This history, **Grenada: The Hour Will Strike Again**, breaks out of the silence and moves those relegated to anonymity in the darkened wings into the bright glare of the center stage of history. Very often, the primary, secondary, and tertiary sources on Grenadian history were unbelievably biased. Errors of judgement were repeated by imperial historians like incantations, and it seemed as though those responding were so completely mesmerized that they forgot to examine the content as seriously as they should have done.

The Grenadian Revolution enabled me to visit that beautiful island over and over again during the four and a half years of the Bishop administration. My wife and I kept a house in the Westerhall-Bacolet

area. We were able to walk in the hills, to explore the Grenadian landscapes and to talk to people from all walks of life.

Several individuals brought me historical data during that time. The most valuable historical source, however, was the rich oral tradition that is still very alive in Grenada. In many of the stories I was told there were vital essences of the people's history, their folk myths and significant details from a collective pool of memory. The richest source of history, Shaw said, is the memory of mankind, and the many stories I heard of Julien Fedon exemplified this claim. Those oral accounts that were often set in bewildering time frames were an invaluable living archive.

In the text that follows, the historical passages that I have re-created, using a technique that Jules Michelet the French historian had developed so brilliantly, are separated from the regular text by a series of three stars (☆ ☆ ☆) at the beginning and end of the passage.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

With sincere gratitude to the fishermen, farmers, artists, musicians, storytellers and immigrants who returned to their green hills of home. They taught me with great patience and subtle persistence how to listen to the land, the people, to weigh words and make the acquaintance of many hidden sorrows. Special thanks must go to my wife, Dr. Joy Carew, for her counsel, support and invaluable help in editing the manuscript. I must also extend my thanks to Rupert and Maureen Lewis for looking at sections of the manuscript while work was still in progress, and from Prague, giving me their perceptions and useful feedback on my version of the Fedon Revolt. Special thanks must go to Buzz and Alice Palmer, my colleagues on the Black Press Institute. It was Buzz's idea that the history should be written at this time. The International Organization of Journalists press which will publish the first edition of **GRENADE: The Hour Will Strike Again**, its directors and editors were discrete, helpful, and left the entire business of the historical content of the work to me. And to all those who treated me with such warmth and hospitality during my sojourn in Prague. Renewing my acquaintance with that marvellous city after thirty years was an experience that was very rewarding. Special thanks must, in addition, be proffered to George Brizan for the fine work he did in collecting invaluable archival material, some of which must certainly have been lost irreparably as a result of the bombings by U.S. warplanes during the October invasion. This is the first of what we hope will be a series of publications in which the Black Press Institute collaborates with other institutions and organizations.

Jan Carew

## PART ONE

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# The Heroic Caribs of Camerhogne

T

# CHAPTER ONE

Camerhogne was the original Carib name for Grenada, the southernmost of the Windward islands. The Carib migrations from the South American continent to the island archipelago and the sea that now bears their name, predated Columbus by a thousand years. The Caribs had begun to establish settlements in Camerhogne five centuries before Columbus had been discovered by the Arawakian Lucayos on the beaches of Guanahani (Watling Island) in 1492. Other peoples had inhabited Camerhogne before the Caribs. There were the Siboneys of ancient times, who left faint imprints in the Point Salines area, where their burial mounds and broken pots have been found. Then the Arawakian peoples had followed in their wake to humanize landscapes, to practice agriculture and to develop superb crafts. But they were partly absorbed and partly driven out by aggressive Carib newcomers from the Amazon-Orinoco basin.

Columbus had sighted Camerhogne in 1498, on his Third Voyage. His caravels, after sailing out of the narrow Dragon's Mouth butted their way across sparkling sea swells in the mid-morning towards an island that was unknown to him. The burning tropical sun had lifted itself high enough above the rim of the horizon to reveal black and white beaches circling the island; and beyond its immaculate belt of beaches were phalanxes of green hills like parts of a rough-hewn jewel with gigantic insets of jade ranging in color from the somber to the pale and opalescent.

\* \* \*

The Admiral of the Ocean Sea had thought of sending an armed party ashore on Camerhogne, but he knew only too well from past experience that fearless Carib warriors lived on that shield of islands that curved around the blue-green sea, and he could ill afford to lose any of his crew.

Besides, in the course of three voyages, Columbus seemed to have trapped himself in elliptical circles in the Atlantic Ocean and the Caribbean Basin, and he wanted to break out of those circles in order to find a passage to new oceans and new riches. That was more important than inviting fresh conflicts with hostile Caribs.

So he observed Camerhogne from the heaving sea, and sailing away, almost as an afterthought renamed it Concepcion. Having named the island and claimed it for the Sovereigns of Castille, he wondered if it really mattered that he had added another potential treasure to their already surfeited collection of recent discoveries; or if they'd care that he had stumbled on a great river to the south of the Gulf of Paria, that must surely be one that led to the Paradise of Eden. No, they would not really care, he told himself. They wanted gold, silver, and spices immediately, not the promise of future riches.

But it was a relief to sail in those island waters after the rough Atlantic crossing he had experienced. There were times when he had stood at the helm for forty-eight hours without sleep. Only his will of steel enabled him to survive those extreme hardships at a time when he was ailing off and on, feeling the burden of his years after a constant struggle against daunting odds, and perhaps, most of all, the bite of bitter disappointment. After having risen to a pinnacle of fame for that short season after his First Voyage, he had been cast aside, forgotten and treated by Ferdinand and Isabella with a certain bemused and slightly contemptuous disregard.

By the time he had crossed the Gulf of Paria and reached the mouth of the mighty Orinoco river, he had been crippled with arthritic pains and a debilitating fever. But having seen the South American continent and the silt-laden amber-tinted Orinoco vomiting its fresh water fifty miles into the Atlantic, he had written in his Journal, and Las Casas assures us that those were "his very words".

I believe that this is a very great continent, until today unknown. And reason aids me greatly because of that so great a river and fresh-water sea . . . and if this be a continent, it is a marvellous thing . . . since so great a river flows that it makes a freshwater sea of forty-eight leagues.<sup>1</sup>

A couple of days later, wracked by arthritic pains and burning up with a high fever, he had given himself over to hallucinations about real and imagined dangers his sons were facing at home; the intrigues of his enemies at Court and his festering quarrel with Ferdinand and Isabella. He railed at how he had fulfilled his part of the Protocol of Capitulation (the contract he had signed so solemnly with them for his Enterprise of the Indies) while they seemed to be more and more reluctant to fulfill theirs.

In lucid moments, while they were anchored off the South American Coast, he had made them prop him up in his sick bed so that he could see the river and the low green landscape that stretched away from it into infinity, and he had scrawled in his log, that such a mighty river, must have come from the Paradise of Eden.

Columbus was single-minded, cunning and charismatic but he was not really devious. He was more of a man of action than an intriguer at Court. He was also a colossal liar, but he could invariably attribute the highest of motives to his lies, and with his charisma and his gift of eloquence he could mesmerise doubters into believing that his lies were in fact the truth.

Ferdinand, on the other hand, was a devious schemer even in his sleep. It was whispered at Court that he slept with a copy of Machiavelli's **The Prince** under his pillow. And aware of how persuasive Columbus could be in face-to-face encounters, he made sure to grant him audiences very seldom. From the start, he had had no intention of abiding by the far-fetched terms of the Protocol if the Genoese did find a passage to the fabulous East. Besides, he, Ferdinand, was suspicious to the point of being paranoid. When Columbus, on his way back from his triumphant and fantastic voyage to the Indies, had made a stopover in Portugal, and had had lengthy talks with King Don Juan and his Queen, Ferdinand, despite Columbus' fervent avowals of eternal loyalty, remained convinced that Columbus had made a secret deal with his Portuguese rival.

\* \* \*

Whether, in fact, Columbus had or had not, is a matter that remains open to speculation. Professor Ivan Van Sertima, in his **They Came Before Columbus**, claims that it was on Columbus' advice, proffered during his meeting with King Don Juan, that the Papal Bull was

eventually drawn up to exclude from the Spanish domains the area of Brazil that juts out into the Atlantic.<sup>2</sup>

Ferdinand's suspicions and the implacable Carib resistance to his colonizing zeal were two of the foremost problems dogging Columbus' footsteps. The Caribs, from the moment Columbus had first heard of them, as his diaries and letters prove, became archetypal symbols of evil and resistance in his febrile imagination. We have been told so often by Imperial historians that the Caribs were "ferocious" "blood-thirsty" warriors, while the Arawaks were "gentle" and "peaceful", that this gross oversimplification and slander has become an article of faith. Las Casas, an eyewitness to many Spanish atrocities, writes in his *Historia* about how,

a brave Spaniard's strength was tested by his ability to tear an infant into two pieces by pulling apart its tiny legs. And, the pieces of the baby were then thrown to the hounds that in their hunting they might be more eager to catch their prey. The pedigree of a Spanish bloodhound had nothing prouder in its record than the credit of half a thousand dead or mangled Indians.<sup>3</sup>

But those "brave" Spaniards were never described as "ferocious" or "bloodthirsty" by Imperial historians. If the Caribs were "ferocious man-eaters", born out of Columbus' medieval fantasies, and the Arawaks, the perfect children of Nature and models for Sir Thomas Moore's *Utopia*, why were they both so summarily dispatched to oblivion with the same genocidal ardour by Spanish and other European colonizers? The rationale for exterminating the "gentle Indians" was most likely the same one used by Richard the Third, when he declared to the Lady Anne, that he had murdered her husband, because he was a man so perfect, that he, the deceased, would be much better off in Paradise with other perfect souls instead of having to share the earth with wicked creatures like himself.

A fact that is either deliberately or inadvertently ignored, is that long before the Caribs began migrating from the mainland to the islands of the archipelago, they had lived side by side with Arawakian peoples for centuries. Migrating initially from the heartland of the Amazon basin somewhere in the Zingu/Tapajos triangle, the Caribs,

who, as a nation, were so few in number, compared to the Amerindian population as a whole, as perpetual adversaries of all other Indian groups and nations, would have been wiped out long before they reached the northern littoral of South America and began moving up to the islands. The Caribs, therefore, as was equally true of the Arawaks, lived through warlike and peaceful epochs, periods of settlement and periods of movement. But by the time they had broken out of the great silences of the vast riverain forests of the Amazon Orinoco Basin, they had honed their skills as fighters, as navigators and had mastered above all, the art of survival in a hemisphere of chance.

Paul Radin, the late Harvard anthropologist, claimed that Caribs and Spanish hidalgos hated one another because they had so much in common, fighting against enemies for centuries they both lived by a simple warrior ethic that could have come straight out of the *Lays of Ancient Rome*, how can a man die better than fighting against hopeless odds.

The Caribbean archipelago, into which Carib migrants had penetrated in successive waves from about 1 000 A.D., curves like an inner rainbow from Cuba to Grenada, and an outer one from the Bahamas to Trinidad and Tobago; and these islands are arranged like strategic stepping-stones between the North and South American continents. The Caribbean Basin, which this arc of islands encloses, has always been easily accessible from within but more difficult to reach from the Atlantic or Pacific oceans. From the very beginning of the Columbian era, the Caribs were to make this island archipelago an arc of resistance to colonizers and they paid a high price in blood and tears for this. Today, the Caribbean Sea bears their name, but only a small pocket of Caribs has survived on the island of Dominica. The five centuries of the Columbian era, therefore, have been ones of continuous struggle of all Native Americans against European settlers; of the worker and peasant in league with intellectuals, students, artists and writers fighting for human rights and the liberty of all; and this struggle was spearheaded by slaves fighting to abolish their own slavery. In order to understand more fully the fight for liberation being waged by the peoples of Central America, Cuba, Grenada and elsewhere in our hemisphere, one must return to the beginnings of the Columbian era. The most recent invaders of Grenada or (Camerhogne), have invented a new rationale for their aggression—an anti-communist crusade—when they are, in fact, attempting to recolonize an

island that has already known a succession of colonial masters: since 1498—the Spanish, the French, the English, Gairy, a neo-colonial imitator of the latter, and a cabal of puppets, installed by U.S. invaders and graced with the title of an “Interim Government”. The invasion of Grenada by U.S.A. imperialists, is a re-enactment of the Prospero/Caliban drama which Columbus had begun five centuries ago. When we reexamine the anatomy of that deadly conflict being played out on the stage of history—Prospero seizing Caliban’s homeland and attempting to enslave him—the past and present collide and fuse. The new U.S. proconsuls and the genocidal Spanish conquistadors become one and the same character, speaking with the same “forked tongue”; and with only slight variations, using the same pious and racist rationale for the most atrocious of their deeds. Grenada has become Camerhone again, a meeting point and new setting for a Carnival of Devils and their surrogates.

But let us turn to the past for a moment and look at the opening act of the Prospero/Caliban drama. Columbus was an unlikely choice for the role of Prospero. Coming from lowly beginnings, his father was a wool carder, he spent a great deal of time and energy trying to deny his working class antecedents, and inventing an upperclass background for himself. Because of this, the more we read about him, the less we seem to divine about the man as a person. It is as though he deliberately mystified his background. “The only thing of which we can be certain,” Duff, tells us after an exhaustive search through primary sources, “is that he must have been alive,” and he continues, “for it must be acknowledged at the outset that Columbus was a colossal liar.”<sup>4</sup> So this archetypal symbol of the colonizer is a man whose name, for centuries, has remained on every tongue, and yet we know so little about him. If we know little about the Caribs, his opponents, that is more understandable. Imperial historians are never disposed to writing history as it is seen through the eyes of the exploited.

Columbus’ diaries, and most of them have vanished, so that what we have are the versions edited by Las Casas with occasional quotes from the originals, are a blend of fantasies interspersed with borrowings from the Medieval writings, obsessive ramblings about a new crusade to recapture Jerusalem from the infidel Turks; special pleadings to the Sovereigns of Castille; an imprecise sailor’s log and some useful scientific observations about the flora, fauna and topography of the islands he had visited. His writings about the Indians leave

much to be desired. Within a matter of weeks of meeting the Arawakian people, he records lengthy conversations with them, and writes with great assurance about their customs, religious beliefs, and their entire ontological system. When these long conversations ostensibly took place, he did not speak a word of any Arawakian language nor did the Arawaks speak a word of Spanish. However, imperial historians have, with few exceptions, unquestioningly repeated Columbus' fictions about the Indians.

In Columbus' diaries, Caonabó is only mentioned briefly. He boasts about Caonabó's capture without revealing anything of the treacherous methods used by Olonzo Ojeda to effect this capture. The "accolade" that Columbus is invariably denied is the one for the holocaust upon the innocent Indians who had treated him so hospitably, and for starting the Atlantic slave trade when he "packed his ships with about five hundred samples of this most profitable merchandise."<sup>5</sup> As a postscript to this infamous act, we are also told that,

to demonstrate his success over the natives,  
Columbus also took with him the "sullen" captive,  
Caonabó. They arrived in Cadiz after a difficult  
voyage during which Caonabó died.<sup>6</sup>

The same Olonzo de Ojeda, who was later to "discover" Grenada in 1500, had tricked Caonabó into coming unarmed to Isabella, the Capital of Hispanola, in order to sign a treaty. Caonabó, a warrior and a man of honor, had foolishly trusted Ojeda's word. Under a flag of truce, the Carib leader was captured and imprisoned, so the most formidable opponent of the Spanish in Hispanola was eliminated by treachery and deceit. New honors were heaped on Ojeda for this ignoble act. He acknowledged these honors in a courtly manner, and then proceeded, on Columbus' orders to "pacify" the five kingdoms of Hispanola. At the end of his campaign of pacification, the most populous island in the Caribbean was well under way to becoming a graveyard for the Indians and a tabula rasa upon which a new history would be written.

A hundred and fifty years later, the same genocidal drama was re-enacted when the French exterminated a Carib nation and settled in Grenada.

On Columbus' First Voyage, the Caribs had released a flight of ar-

rows to warn him off when he had sailed too close to their coast. He was on his way to the site of La Navidad. Those Carib arrows marked the first hostile encounter between Prospero and Caliban in the New World, and interestingly, this encounter took place in the narrow straits between Cuba and Haiti. Columbus had named the place the Golfo de las Fleches, the Gulf of Arrows, a name that it bears to this day.

Fort La Navidad, a military base, represented the first attempt at setting up a permanent settlement in the New World, and Charles Duff, a distinguished Irish scholar of the Columbian era, who scrupulously extracted his research material from primary sources whenever possible, says of this initial bridgehead of European civilization, that the first step the colonists took was to torment and maltreat the inoffensive natives, from whom they took gold ornaments and other valuables. Then they set about seducing their wives and daughters. Gold and women soon caused bickerings and jealousies which developed into bloody quarrels. Duff would have excused these settlers because they were "ex-convicts, rascals and lawless fellows, most of them."<sup>7</sup>

But Columbus' diary dated January 2, 1493, tells us he left on the Island of Espanola (which the Americans called Bohio<sup>8</sup>):

a fortress and thirty-nine men whom he says to have been great friends of King Guacanagari (the local Arawak ruler who had treated Columbus and his men with great warmth, friendliness and hospitality), and over these he placed Diego de Arana, a native of Cordova, Pedro Gutierrez, Butler to the King's household, and Rodrigo de Escovedo, a native of Segovia and a nephew of Fray Rodrigo Perez . . . He left them also seed for sowing, his officers, secretary and alguacil [constable] among them, a ship-carpenter, caulkier, a good gunner who understood engineering, a cooper, a physician and a tailor, all being men of the sea.<sup>9</sup>

So amongst the thirty-nine settlers, a significant number were respectable middle-class, albeit lower middle-class, gentlemen with administrative training and much sought after technical skills. And had

they been so inclined they could easily have controlled the recalcitrants and brought them to heel. But they were all guilty of brutalizing their Amerindian hosts.

The peaceful Arawaks who had welcomed Columbus and his men, goaded to breaking-point by their brutal and insensitive guests, had obviously sent word to Caonabó pleading for deliverance.

While, at the fort, after many internal squabbles, in one of which a Spaniard was killed, a group left their post to search for the "golden mountains of Cibao."

Duff tells us.

The cacique or chief who ruled over the territory in which these mountains were situated was the fierce Caonabó—a man who had risen by courage and cunning from the status of a simple adventurer to that of a chief whose influence was paramount over the whole of Espanola. He was of Carib origin. He regarded with jealousy and distrust the arrival of the Spaniards and even his otherwise unsqueamish feelings must have turned into a bitter hatred of them as accounts reached him of the cruelties and tyranny practiced upon the peaceful coast Indians by the handful of rascals whom Columbus had left at the fort. Into the territories of their fearsome chief, Gutierrez and Escovedo and their followers had ventured to intrude. They were all immediately put to death.<sup>10</sup>

Caonabó and his Carib warriors were our first freedom fighters, our vanguard Independistas. In their initial and decisive encounter with the first European settlers, it is significant that they fought to defend the freedom and integrity of an Arawakian coastal people, and they did at a time when they were not directly threatened. This act of solidarity hardly squares with the popular imperial myth about the eternal enmities between the Carib and Arawakian peoples.

Caonabó and Mayreni, another powerful chief, obviously understood the political and military implications of allowing arrogant and well armed Spanish intruders to establish a bridgehead on the coastal perimeter of their domains. Mayreni gave Caonabó's troops rights of

passage through the territory he controlled, so that their common enemy the Spanish settlers, could be taken by surprise and wiped out.

Caonabó . . . executed his military movements with such skill and speed that he and his army arrived close to the village of Guacanagari without being observed. In league with him was his ally, Mayreni . . . The attack was made in the dead of night. So complete was the surprise of the Spaniards, that the fort was captured before the least resistance could be attempted. The houses of the village where the others were sleeping were soon surrounded and set on fire . . . eight fled in despair, only to take refuge in the sea and be drowned.<sup>11</sup>

The Battle of La Navidad was one fought against men with superior weapons, and compared to the Caribs with their blow guns, spears and arrows, men who had enormous fire power at their disposal. Caonabó neutralized the odds against him by first seeing to it that the enemy forces were divided—one group was lured into the mountains, another slept in Guacanagari's village, and only a small contingent manned the fort. It is obvious that the great majority of Indians were on Caonabó's side. That reverend gentleman, Fray Bernado Buyl, the good Benedictine who had come (on Columbus' Second Voyage) to capture the souls of the natives for the Church, began his labors of peace and charity in the Western Hemisphere by urging Columbus to make a holy example of Guacanagari by putting him to death immediately. Columbus refused. He was obsessed with the idea of crushing the Caribs and he was above all a single-minded man. Whether Guacanagari and some of his meek and hospitable followers were guilty or not, they could wait their turn for a journey into oblivion. The Admiral of the Ocean Seas had already set inexorable priorities—the Caribs had had the malice to fight back and for this a 'final solution' was the only answer. Columbus saw Hispaniola as an important stepping stone to the Kingdom of the Great Khans and he was not going to permit Caribs or anyone else to interfere with his plans. And so long as Caonabó was alive, no Spanish settlement on Hispaniola was safe. He went to sleep at nights with voices muttering inside his head,

"Caonabó delanda est!"<sup>12</sup>

Columbus' Second Voyage to the New World was a test of endurance and will. When he returned to Fort La Navidad and found it in ruins and its Spanish defenders wiped out, he decided that not only Caonabó, but all Amerindians should be destroyed or enslaved.

With the frustrations of his Second Voyage increasing daily, Columbus despatched "twelve ships . . . to Spain, whither they carried specimens of gold from Cibao, also of unknown plants and fruits, and Carib natives."<sup>13</sup>

Vallant, the U.S. historian and anthropologist, tells us that the forty-seven fruits and vegetables Columbus sent from the New World to Europe (and these included the tomato, the potato, the squash, the pumpkin, corn, peanuts, and different varieties of beans) helped to double the European food supply during the next seventy-five years. A curious irony to this story, is that five centuries after sending this gift of high-protein legumes to Europe, millions of people in the Caribbean are undernourished and on the brink of starvation.

Whether the captives Columbus despatched to Spain along with the plants and fruits were indeed Caribs, is extremely doubtful. It was a time when the trickle of gold coming into his coffers was causing him much anxiety. He had imposed a levy of a hawk's bell full of gold on every Indian head of a family, but since the gold did not exist in the streams in the quantities required to meet this harsh imposition, the Admiral had become desperate. He, therefore, no doubt, scooped up Indians who were close by, unarmed and easily captured, and these certainly would not have been Caribs.

Columbus sent this human cargo along with a proposal to the Queen, "that the savage and cannibalistic Caribs should be exchanged as slaves against livestock, etc., to be provided by merchants in Spain."<sup>14</sup> He put forward many plausible arguments in favor of a scheme whereby the peaceful inhabitants of the New World, would be relieved of having such fierce and formidable neighbors, and heathen Caribs themselves would be snatched from the jaws of damnation and perdition, and their conversion to Christianity be led into the way of true salvation.

The scheme was rejected by Isabella. Perhaps she had had her fill of warlike dark-skinned peoples. The armies of Spain had only captured the last Moorish stronghold of Granada seven months before Columbus set out on his First Voyage.

In 1496, when Columbus had tried to convince Queen Isabella that "the savage and cannibalistic Caribs should be exchanged as slaves against livestock"<sup>15</sup>, he had underlined his argument with some interesting details:

We can send from here in the name of the Holy Trinity all the slaves and Brazil wood which could be sold . . . we can sell 4,000 slaves who will be worth, at least, 20 millions.<sup>16</sup>

Richard Moore, the Afro-Barbadian scholar, in his illuminating essay, "Caribs, Cannibals and Human Relations," quotes from the actual proclamation of 1503 issued by learned theologians of the Catholic Church. This document slyly overruled Isabella's order of 1500. Its pompous language hardly belied the fact that it was the New World's first ecclesiastical license for ethnocide, slavery and racism. It proclaimed:

Being as they are hardened in their hard habits of idolatry and cannibalism, it was agreed that I shoud issue this decree . . . I hereby give license and permission . . . to capture them . . . paying us the share that belongs to us, and to sell them and utilize their services, without incurring any penalty thereby, because if the Christians bring them to these lands and make use of their services, they will be more easily converted and attracted to our Holy Faith.<sup>17</sup>

But for Bartolomé de las Casas, the Franciscan who accompanied Columbus on his Third Voyage, the results of this license for ethnocide would never have been truthfully recorded. He tells us that the Amerindians "had a greater disposition towards civility than the European peoples,"<sup>18</sup> and that it was,

upon such people the Spaniards fell as tigers, wolves and lions fall on lambs and kids. Forty years they ranged those lands, massacring the wretched Indians until in the land of Espanola, which [in 1492] had a population estimated at

three millions of people, scarcely three hundred Indians remained to be counted. The history of Espanola is the history of Cuba, Puerto Rico and Jamaica. Thirty islands in the neighborhood of Puerto Rico were entirely depopulated. On the sides of the continent, kingdom after kingdom were desolated, tribe after tribe exterminated. Twelve millions of Indians on those continental lands perished under the barbarous handling of the Spaniards. Their property was no more secure than their lives. For greed of gold, ornaments were torn from neck and ear, and as the masked burglar threatens his victim until he reveals the hiding place of his store, the Indians were subjected to the most cruel tortures to compel the disclosure of mines which never existed and the location of gold in streams and fields in which the Almighty had never planted it. Obedience secured no better treatment than sullenness, faithful service had no better reward than that which followed treachery. The meanest Spaniard might violate the family of the most exalted chief, and home had no sanctity in the bestial eyes of the soldier. The courtiers rode proudly through the streets of Isabella and in those of the new Isabella, their horses terrifying the poor Indians while their riders shook their plumed heads and waved their glistening swords. As they rode along their lances were passed into women and children, and no greater pastimes was practiced by them than wagering as to a cavalier's ability to cleave completely a man with one dexterous blow of his sword. A score would fall before one would drop in the divided parts essential to winning the wager. No card or dice afforded equal sport. Another knight from Spain must sever his victim's head from the shoulder at the first sweep of the sword. Fortunes were lost on the ability of a swordsman to run an Indian through the body at a designated

spot. Children were snatched from their mother's arms and dashed against the rocks as they passed. Other children they threw into the water that their mothers might witness drowning struggles. Some natives they hung on gibbets, and it was their reverential custom to gather at a time sufficient victims to hang thirteen in a row, and thus piously to commemorate Christ and the Twelve Apostles. Moloch must have been in the skies <sup>19</sup> . . . I have been an eyewitness of all these cruelties, and an infinite number of others which I pass over in silence.<sup>20</sup>

Duff writes a short postscript to this atrocious record stating that:

Under these conditions the race of Indians dissolved. Even before twelve years had elapsed after the discovery of Espanola several hundred thousand of its original inhabitants had perished, victims of the cruelty of the white man. Its population, estimated in 1492 at three million, had dwindled to about three hundred. Of the six hundred thousand people in Puerto Rico and Jamaica scarcely two hundred remained half a century later. The same tragedy is to be recorded of Cuba and other islands. It is estimated that in this terrible episode of human history about twelve million Indians disappeared forever from the face of the earth.<sup>12</sup>

It was in the wake of this apocalyptic erasure of the Amerindian presence that the African slave made his appearance in the New World, countless thousands of whom were brought to fill the vacancies left by the depleted and sometimes completely decimated Amerindian force.

Columbus never produced any valid evidence to support his vilification of the Caribs as savages and cannibals. On his Second Voyage he had visited Dominica, Guadeloupe and other islands in the eastern Caribbean and in Guadeloupe he had come across a Carib settlement where, "his men found vast quantities of human bones and skulls hanging about in the huts."<sup>22</sup> These relics of ancestor worship were cited by Columbus and his men as evidence of Carib anthropophagism.

It was as fatuous to come to this conclusion as it would have been for Caribs to have visited the catacombs<sup>s</sup> of Rome, and, seeing the piles of bones that certain Catholic Orders kept as sacred relics, concluded that the Pope and his followers were cannibals.

Tiho Narva, the Afro-Carib poet, writer and historian wrote in the preface of his *Rape The Sun*,

No valid history of the Caribbean and the Americas can be written without taking into account the holocaust that engulfed the indigenous Carib and Arawakian Indians. For silence about this monstrous deed leaves chasms between the lines that only truth, compassion and dedication to the idea of eliminating forever the root-causes of exploitation and plunder can fill. The Cubans have made a giant leap forward in this direction, and we must walk side by side with them. When Jose Martí, said, 'Do we not see how the same blow that paralyzes the Indian paralyzes America? And not until the Indian is made to walk tall, will America,' he was speaking for us all . . . <sup>23</sup>

On December 22, 1492, Columbus wrote in his diary,

Our Lord in his piety, guide me that I may find the gold, I mean their mines.<sup>24</sup>

and on December 25, he enunciated an Indian policy with this entry,

... nothing is wanting but to know their language and give them orders, because they will do as they are bidden without the least contradiction.<sup>25</sup>

George Lamming, the Barbadian poet, novelist and one of the most perceptive of commentators on Caribbean affairs, wrote in his **Pleasures of Exile**,

First Columbus, coaxing and bullying his crew to find India by a western route, choosing that name from his mistake and a legend of his time: for that land, known as Antiglia or the Antilles, which ancient charts show in the region of Azores, next the full European descent, urged both by adventure and greed; Spain, France, England, Holland as well as the Danes, and Swedes, and a tiny, almost forgotten rock-pool of Germans! All arrived in this Caribbean sea like an epidemic ignorant of its specific target: human heroes and victims of an imagination and a quest shot through with gold. And all have remained in the complexions of their descendants who now inhabit these lands.

The indigenous Carib and Arawak Indians, living by their own lights long before the European adventure, gradually disappear, in a blind wild forest of blood. That mischievous gift, the sugar cane, is introduced, and a fantastic human migration moves to the New World of the Caribbean; deported crooks and criminals, defeated soldiers and Royalist gentlemen fleeing from Europe, slaves from the West Coast of Africa, East Indians, Chinese, Corsicans, and Portuguese. The list is always incomplete, but they all move and meet on an unfamiliar soil, in a violent rhythm of race and religion.<sup>26</sup>

This evocative essay could serve as the introduction to a history of Cuba, Haiti, Santo Domingo, Puerto Rico and, of course, Grenada. In listing these islands, one has left out at least a dozen others in the Leeward and Windward islands for which the introduction would be equally appropriate.

In 1500, Olonzo de Ojeda, along with Juan de la Cosa, a mapmaker and friend of Columbus' brother Ferdinand, and Alberigo Vespucci, landing on the Grenadian shores, named the island Mayo, and claimed to be its "discoverers". It was the same Ojeda who had walked across a tightrope between two tall buildings to catch Queen Isabella's eye; the same aristocratic cut-throat, who as Columbus' military Commander had mounted a grisly genocidal campaign against the people of Hispaniola, destroying, what some historians described as five provinces--although La Casas described them as highly-developed kingdoms. No doubt, genocide against provincialis, is not as hideous an act as that of exterminating subjects of a ruling monarch! Whether they were provinces or kingdoms is now an academic question, however, since their inhabitants were wiped out and left us no descendants.

The names of these vanished kingdoms: Caizimu, Huhabo, Cayaho, Bainoa, and Guacayarima are all that remain.

Ojeda, having served Columbus well as a horseman of the apocalypse, became an explorer in his own right. He, and Alberigo Vespucci, had a great deal in common. They were both ruthless, ambitious, and they were loyal only so far as their loyalty brought them benefits. Columbus, for example, sick and almost demented with pain, fever and fatigue, had ignored the great riches, on the pearl coast of Venezuela. Ojeda had not, he remembered where they were and returned. Driving the Indians mercilessly to dive until their eardrums would burst and their lung dissolve into bubbles, he gathered a fortune in pearls for himself. Grenada did not interest him particularly, after he laid claim to being the island's discoverer, and had it duly mapped as a possession of Spain. And as for Vespucci, he was not really averse to amassing great wealth, but fame was the spur that drove him more than a lust for gold.

It is ironical that Vespucci, a plagiarist and dilettante should be the one to provide us with a historical link between Nicaragua and Grenada, and not only with Grenada, but with all of the Americas.

There is a mountain range in Nicaragua called the **Sierra Amerrique**, and a group of Indians called **Los Amerriques**. These mountains stretch between Juigalpa and Libertad in the province of Chontales, and they separate Nicaragua from the Mosquito Coast. The Amerriques had, since pre-Columbian times, always been in contact with the area around Cape Garcia a Dios, and the whole length of the Mosquito Coast.<sup>26</sup> In 1502, Columbus visited this coast at Carrai and Carambaru. In 1497, Vespucci landed at Cape Garcia a Dios, and, in 1505, also sailed along the Mosquito Coast. Both navigators must certainly have heard the word "Amerrique" from the Indians over and over again during those voyages.

After the initial greetings and the limping exchanges of pleasantries, it was a tradition with explorers like Columbus and Vespucci to ask their hosts where gold could be found. The alluvial gravels of the Sierra Amerrique had yielded gold for the Indians from time immemorial. They used gold, the sun's sweat, to create objects of surpassing beauty. In their eyes, it had little value in itself until it was touched by a man's creative genius, therefore they saw it as a good metal for sculpture. By capturing light on its burnished surfaces, gold could link human beings to the sun, and both the sculptor's act of creative labor and the object created could become touched by magic, mystery and beauty. Sometimes they indented chunks of raw gold, and putting them in a sack full of sand, allowed the sea or a running stream to sculpt and polish them, and through this process the object, man, nature and the gods could become one.

For the colonizer, on the other hand, gold meant money, personal and national aggrandizement, and power over others. In their burgeoning mercantilist system, gold could buy a place in the very Throne Room of the Kingdom of Heaven for the most despicable sinner. And, in particular, once this sinner made the right propitiatory noises to the Almighty and gave generously to the Church, he could be assured of absolution from any crime committed against the colonized. Cortez had declared that he came for gold, not to till the land. He was noted for his occasional outbursts of brutal candour about himself and his countrymen. Their lust for gold was such that the Indians declared that the colonizer would even rape the sun to rob it of its miraculous sweat. Cortez had also confessed to a Mexican nobleman in Montezuma's court that Spaniards tended to suffer from a disease that only gold could cure.

For Columbus and Vespucci, therefore, the words "Amerrique" and "gold" would have become synonymous. After his visits to the Mosquito Coast, he made the last one in 1505, Vespucci changed his Christian name from **Alberigo** to **Amerigo**. In the archives of Toledo, a letter from Vespucci to the Cardinal dated December 9, 1508, is signed **Amerigo** with the double 'r', as in the Indian Amerrique.<sup>27</sup> And between 1508 and 1512, the year in which Vespucci died, at least two other signatures with the Christian name **Amerigo** were recorded. Dr. A. Le Plongeon, a 19th century scholar from Merida (Yucatan), in a letter to the French Professor Jules Marcou dated December 10th, 1881, wrote:

The name **America** or **Amerrique** in the Mayan language means a country of perpetually strong wind, or the Land of the Wind, and sometimes the suffix "-que", "-ik" and "-ika" can mean not only wind or air but also a spirit that breathes, life itself . . .<sup>28</sup>

We must, therefore, reclaim the name of our America and restore it once again to its primordial and evocative meaning: Land of Wind, the fountainhead of life and movement.

In the Mayan genesis myth, the **Popol Vuh**, Wind stands at the center of creation. As the story unfolds, we are told that it was manifested to the gods:

That at dawn man should appear. So they decided on the creation and the growth of trees and bees and the birth of life and the creation of man. This was resolved in the darkness and in the night by the Heart of Heaven called Hurricane.<sup>29</sup>

On the rocky eastern slopes of the Sierra Amerrique, the wind continues to pound insistently like giant fists upon the gates of time, demanding to be recognized. And, in this area, a new Nicaragua has arisen as if to fulfill the prophecy implicit in the name, America.

Vespucci did not write very much about the islands he visited, but concentrated more on the continental mainland. He confirmed what Columbus had only once suggested: that they had indeed stumbled

upon what was for Europeans, a "New World." Eventually, America would be named after him, although he was far from being a Magellan or a Columbus.

Camerhogne, however, duly mapped by Juan de la Cosa, began to appear on Royal Cedulas as "Mayo" or as "Concepcion" by 1511. But, by 1530, the name "Grenada" was the only one used on official Spanish documents.<sup>30</sup> For a hundred and nine years after the Ojeda, Vespucci and de la Cosa mapping excursion, Grenada was left to its Carib owners. Jean Pere Labat, a French priest, a slaveowner and a shrewd business entrepreneur, having lived close to Carib communities in the Eastern Caribbean for some time, paid an occasional grudging tribute to these Vikings of the Caribbean Saga. He stated, after visiting Grenada, that the large Carib population lived in "car-bets", which were large round communal houses or villages with fifty to sixty families, and that these were located all over the island and were both prosperous and stable. They had at their disposal, he affirms, rich fishing grounds, an abundance of game and fertile agricultural lands, and they exploited these natural resources judiciously and with commendable prudence.

These Grenadian Caribs also maintained very close relations with their kith and kin in the other Windward islands, the Leewards and on mainland territories of Venezuela and the Guianas. They had learnt in the course of their perilous migrations that if one group was threatened then all Caribs everywhere were in danger. They understood, too, that in a spirit of enlightened self-interest, they did not necessarily have to like groups or nations to trade with them or to have successful working relationships based on mutual respect. One such group, was the Igneri Arawaks in Trinidad. After protracted and bloody encounters with this warlike group, they had reached a mutually satisfactory accommodation long before the Spanish appeared on the scene.

The Caribs lived by a simple warrior ethic: they admired those who fought for their rights, and despised those who didn't. In their cosmology, Paradise was for all men except the poor in spirit and the cowardly.

Scholars, seeking to justify colonialism, suffer from a curious myopia when it comes to defining cultural, historical and other factors that unite indigenous peoples. They seem to bring to their scholarship a natural predisposition to ferret out the things that divide non-Euro-

pean peoples. Because of this essential weakness, vast areas of scholarship are neglected. Little is known, for example, about the northernmost points of Carib penetration. What we have to mull over in this particular field of study, are fragments which somehow never seem to fit, and questions which remain unanswered. Did the Caribs, for example, reach as far north as Florida? We know now that Carib pilots had helped Columbus and other European Sea Captains to navigate the treacherous seas north of Puerto Rico, Hispanola and Cuba; that a German archeologist had found pre-Columbian Carib burial mounds in the Canary Islands; that swift Carib sea-going canoes, some with as many as seventy rowers, sailed regularly from the Venezuelan coast to Puerto Rico; one might well ask, therefore, was there any coastal stretch in the entire Caribbean Basin that both Carib and Arawak sea-going canoes could not reach? The truth is that the navigational skills of the Caribs were in every respect equal to those of the Polynesians about whom a cult is now being developed. This cult is possible because, despite the depredations of colonizers, remnants of the Polynesians managed to survive. They had much vaster oceanscapes in which to hide. The island Caribs, however, were cornered in their rainbow arch of resistance, and they had no choice but to fight to the death. The Cliffs of Manzanilla in Trinidad, Carib's Leap in Grenada, Morne Sauteur in Dominica are the high steep rockfaces where whole societies of Caribs took their final stand, preferring mass suicide to surrender. These promontories now bear silent witness to the vanished presence of the Caribs.

For over a century after Grenada was discovered by Columbus in 1498, and rediscovered by the Ojeda, Vespucci, de la Cosa triumvirate, in 1500, no European settlements were established on the island. But in the first half of the seventeenth century, the British and French who had seized and established their power in a number of islands in the archipelago, began to turn covetous eyes on this island which had once been claimed by Spain as one of her possessions. The Caribs, living in Grenada for centuries before the Europeans arrived on the scene, were considered an obstacle, but by no means an insurmountable one. Such obstacles had already been removed from over forty islands since 1492.

The seventeenth century was one, not only of further exploration and conquest for European imperial powers, it was also one of consolidation in colonies already seized and settled.

Besides, the previous century of expansion and conquest had heightened internal contradictions and released new social and political forces in the home countries of the principal empire builders themselves. A burgeoning new science and technology, impregnated with ideas from the Renaissance was, on the theoretical side, both posing and answering many new questions that had been suspended in a state of stasis for centuries; and on the practical side, with new inventions constantly being made, changing the world.

In addition, they, the principal expansionist European powers, were increasingly being confronted by their own restive millions chafing under the halter of absolute monarchies: impatient and ambitious mercantilist elements, along with entrepreneurs of every description, pirates, freebooters, elements of a martial peasantry that could not be sent back to the stultifying and brutal feudal world they had left—all of these were challenging the hereditary landowning aristocracy in England, France and the south-eastern area of Spain around Barcelona.

The European discovery of America made it possible for the rulers of Spain, Portugal, England and Holland (and later other European powers learnt from them) to export to distant lands the most militant, resourceful and, indeed, the most potentially troublesome of their dissident subjects. With new lands to conquer and colonize, and new peoples to subjugate, age old class antagonisms at home, could, through a catharsis of greed and great expectations, be transformed into fantasises of racial superiority abroad. And if revolutions did blow the lid off of corrupt absolute monarchies, as was the case with the 1644, Cromwellian one in England, the class interests of the parvenu—the merchants and shopkeepers—soon drove them back into a marriage of convenience with the very monarchy they had so recently toppled. The peasants and the workingclass, always suspicious of these neat accommodations with their natural enemies, could be kept divided with promises of rich spoils for all, and in the event this did not work, the use of a repressive state apparatus. This new middleclass also had a more profound understanding than the aristocracy of the mesmeric effect that a skillful combination of bread and circuses, and occasional displays of pageantry and power, could have on the minds of the dispossessed. After all, they had only recently left the ranks of the scuffling workers and peasants. So when this class had imposed the cosmetic changes that the English monarchy obvi-

ously needed to survive in a new era of production and expansion both at home and overseas, they reinstated it.

Once the period of pacification, and the cruder forms of repression, had ended in the colonies, the colonizer began to impart the lessons of social, psychological and political controls to actual and potential colonial elites, and they found eager and apt students. This process of what Lamming calls a psychological mongrelization was by no means a simple one. It began with the trauma of slavery, continued with the subjection of millions of colonial subjects to successive waves of alienation, until eventually, self-hatred and a habit of dependence created a personality that was complex, cunning and given to mimicry to such an extent that it was often difficult to find the real person hiding behind layers of masks. It also created those who resisted—the most oppressed class and their allies.

It was against this broader historical background that the European colonization of Grenada began. With agricultural products like tobacco, indigo, cotton, spices and sugarcane fetching good prices in the European market, it was only a matter of time before rival claims to Grenada would be made by the English and the French. The Spanish, who first laid claim to the island, had such a vast world-wide empire that they could not hold on to all the territories that their royal cartographers designated as theirs. They had neither the resources nor the manpower to do this. As it was, their power on land and sea was overextended, in the same way that the Portuguese land and sea power was. They had both swallowed so much so quickly that for centuries they would be incapacitated by the surfeit of plunder which overflowed from their royal coffers and began to push them backwards into the future. Those lean and avaricious newcomers to the arena of empire building—the protestant English and Dutch, and breathing down their imperial necks, the more ample and urbane French, with their unresolved conflict of Catholics and Huguenots, tearing at one another's throats—kept stalking the Spanish like hungry wolves; and any spoils that slipped from the Spanish Imperial grasp were snatched up and claimed. It was as though these nations were playing the childrens' game of finders-keepers with islands and continents.

Grenada came into the arena of Anglo-French rivalry by default. The Spanish claimed it, and then left it to its Carib inhabitants for a hundred and eleven years. Cortez had told a Mexican nobleman, he came for gold, not to till the land, and Grenada had no gold, or the

Caribs would have been sent on their journey to oblivion much earlier. .

In 1609, two hundred and three English settlers landed in Grenada from the ships Diana, Penelope and Endeavour. All the expenses of this unfortunate and ill-conceived enterprise were underwritten by a group of London merchants. No one knows who had sold them the idea, but it would be interesting to find out the ages of these settlers, where they had hailed from in England, how many women were in the group, and what they had been told about this island in the sun, before setting out. But they did land and try to settle on this Carib island, and to claim it for England. The Caribs were not consulted about this project, and, naturally, took exception to an intrusion by armed and uninvited guests, who had obviously come to stay. They were well aware of what had happened in dozens of the Leeward and Windward islands after the first European settlers had established a foothold. So the settlers had hardly unpacked their gear, when the Caribs surrounded and harassed them night and day. When the ships returned from Trinidad, the survivors boarded them gratefully. Expelled from an island in the sun, they returned to the cold and the fogs of an English December in 1609. The gentlemen who had led the enterprise, we are told, were Godfrey, Hall, Lull and Robinson. No one knows whether they had survived to return to England.

In the meantime, the Carib population, Labat tells us, was increasing apace due to the fertility of the soil, their agricultural skills and the abundance of fish and game.

But the Anglo-French rivalries in that lower curve in the rainbow arch of the archipelago were becoming sharper. In 1626, Grenada was officially listed as one of the islands belonging to the French Company of the Islands of America, a joint stock company created by Cardinal Richelieu. But a year later, King Charles I of England, two decades before he lost his head, very cavalierly had Grenada included in the Carlisle Proprietorship, a concession of islands in the Eastern Caribbean, handed on a platter to his royal cousin, the Earl of Carlisle.

In 1638, Monsieur de Poincy, French Governor of St. Kitts, with a nod from the proprietors of the Company of the Islands of America, attempted to establish a settlement on the island. It shared the same fate as the 1609 Godfrey, Hall, Lull and Robinson enterprise -the Caribs drove out the Governor and his motley band of settlers.

Writings from this period indicate that the Caribs made a very clear distinction between visitors and settlers. The former, they treated with warmth and hospitality, while the latter, they saw as intruders who threatened their survival as a people. European writers of the period portrayed the Caribs, mostly as "ferocious man-eaters" or as "simple-minded natives" but every now and then, accounts which contradicted these racist clichés would slip onto the pages of some anonymous work. This account is not by an anonymous writer, however, it was written by the priest himself. In 1644, a Spanish vessel made a stop in Grenada for food and firewood on its way to Venezuela. Don Tiburcio Radin, a member of the crew, was impressed by the warmth and civility with which they were received. This gentleman, on becoming a Capuchin priest, returned in 1649 as Father Francis of Pamphona, but when he arrived there, he tells us, he found the French in control of Grenada and recognized a Dominican priest among them, so he returned to Cumana in Venezuela, a disappointed man. Father Pamphona must have got his dates mixed up because after Governor De Poincy's group was driven out by the Caribs in 1638, there was no attempt to reestablish a French presence in Grenada until 1650; unless, of course, some of the French had remained alive under Carib rule.

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In 1650, Governor Du Parquet of Martinique began to implement a plan that had been germinating in his mind for some time: the establishment of the first large scale and permanent European settlement in Grenada. He made careful preparations to ensure that this venture would succeed. After his plans were well underway, he began with an urbane perfidy to negotiate with the Caribs for the right to "visit" the island for an extended period; so in February of 1650, the governor sent word to the Grenadian Caribs that he would welcome a visit by their leaders since there were urgent matters of mutual interest that they had to discuss. News had reached him from reliable sources, he intimated, that the English might be planning to invade the island. A month later (depending on the wind and the tides, the average vessel took four days to sail from Martinique to Grenada, but the Carib longboats could do the journey in two and a half days) the Caribs chose Kaierouanne to head a delegation of chiefs in response

to the Governor's invitation. By the time the delegation had landed in Martinique, Du Parquet had almost completed his plans to invade, seize Grenada, and drive the Caribs out.

When the Caribs arrived at the Governor's house, Du Parquet treated them with an easy deference and he appeared to be in a jovial, confident and friendly mood. The Carib leader, neither friendly nor unfriendly, met the Governor's joviality with an unassailable calm. His unsmiling eyes glittered like polished obsidian, and revealed nothing as they made four with Du Parquet's devious ones. The pink flesh around the Governor's eyes crinkling and puffing out slightly from an excess of good living, shifted their focus every now and then. What a contrast these two represented! Kaierouanne's body was lean and hard. With a wareshi strapped to his back, he could walk thirty-five miles a day over mountains. Du Parquet was thickening around the middle, and the most rudimentary physical exertion left him out of breath and sweating like a horse. When he went up country, slaves carried him on a litter. But Du Parquet had guns—cannons, pistols, rifles, Lombards—and the Caribs, bows and arrows. Du Parquet, jovial and making expansive gestures with his arms and hands, repeated his tale about the greedy and rapacious English, hatching plans to seize Grenada, and then tagged on the suggestion that the French were willing to act as protectors of the Caribs. He was planning to visit Grenada, he said, almost as an afterthought, and could not begin to think of doing so without Kaierouanne's permission. "We are coming in peace," he said.

"We receive many visitors," the Carib Chief said, "and you, too, are welcome to come . . . as a visitor and a guest. As for this question of protectors, I will take the matter up with my people."

Du Parquet, as a gesture of goodwill, sent the Carib delegation home with gifts of cloth, axes, billhooks, knives, cutlasses, glass beads, mirrors, bells and two quarts of brandy.

Back home in Grenada in the Chief's round house with its conical roof neatly thatched with trooli palm leaves, Kaierouanne had told his War Council that having the French protect them from the English was like having one maipuri jaguar protect you from another. "They have the same spots, the same fangs, the same cruel claws, and they're both hungry for our land. Our only hope is to encourage them to fight against each other. I've already sent word to the English that the Frenchies are planning to invade our Grenada.

What I can feel in my bones, is that they will come—one or the other, or both of these jaguars . . . they will come . . ." he left the rest of the thought suspended in the air, but they understood that he was intimating to them that they were cornered, threatened and they would soon have to fight for their lives once more; only, this time, the peril was greater than any they had faced since their ancestors left the Zingu-Tapajos triangle.

\* \* \*

Labat, that ubiquitous, roving, hustler-priest, claims that in return for du Parquet's trivial gifts, Kaierouanne had agreed to cede most of Grenada to the French, and further, according to this fictitious claim, the Carib Chief had also consented to gather his people together and concentrate their carbets in a restricted corner of their island. The priestly gentleman must have been in his cups or else he had allowed his French chauvinism to override his better judgment when he wrote this.

Du Parquet also claimed that the Caribs had "invited" him to colonize their island. But this is understandable since he had to justify his ignoble and treacherous actions. These claims, however, have a contemporary ring to them for the American imperialists who invaded Grenada 333 years later are making the same spurious claim about being "invited".

Marx once wrote, "History always repeats itself. The first time is tragedy, and the next, farce."

\* \* \*

As soon as the sub-Chiefs and elders who attended the War Council in Kaierouanne's round house had disbanded and melted into the night, the Chief began to prepare for a long journey. If Du Parquet was coming to pay them a peaceful visit, then he was going about it in a strange way, for Carib spies were bringing word back to Grenada that the Governor was preparing for a major expedition.

Kaierouanne, using the largest of his seagoing canoes, one that required a crew of forty, set out at dawn, following a south-easterly course. The covered midsection of the sleek dugout with its graceful lines and its bow raised out of the water and tilted upwards, was

loaded with gifts and goods for trading, including some of Du Parquet's gifts to him.

The impending visit by the French meant that the Grenadian Caribs had to prepare for war. Kaierouanne, therefore, was going on a mission to purchase weapons from the Warraus, an Arawakian group in the north of Guiana. The Warraus were the finest craftsmen in the northern reaches of the South American continent. They made tools, weapons, artifacts, pottery and basketwork with a creative genius that no other Indian group could match. Traders came from the islands and distant parts of the Amazon and Orinoco basins to vie for their products. As a race, the Warraus were small-boned, graceful and laughter came easily to them. On reaching the Venezuelan coast, Kaierouanne followed its curves and indentations until, timing his entry into the Dragon's Mouth unerringly, for powerful tides could sweep large and small boats in and out of that narrow gap like so many pieces of driftwood, he headed south across the Gulf of Paria, taking the very route Columbus had done half a century before. Once again, reading the currents and crosscurrents that made the wide estuary of the Orinoco treacherous, he waited for the hightide to slow down the race of this river. When the tide was at its peak, he crossed over swiftly, taking his turn to paddle and leading the rhythmic chant of a rowing song to encourage the others to greater effort. Occasionally, as the longboat moved within shouting distance of a green and fertile island in the estuary, he raised his ornate Chief's paddle to indicate to silent and hidden Arawakian on-lookers, that he was on a peaceful mission. Immediately on crossing the Orinoco, with the ocean tides pushing him into the smaller river, he entered the mouth of the Waini. After half a day of paddling, he signalled his men to turn sharply away from the center of the river, and moving silently under a narthex of intertwined leaves and branches, came to a wide landing from which a rock staircase led to a large Warrau settlement. A ceremonial group of Warrau Chiefs, whom the drums had told that Kaierouanne was on his way, came forward to welcome him and his men.

Only in the making and crafting of oceangoing canoes, could the Caribs surpass the Warraus as craftsmen. At first, the Caribs had attacked them and captured their women. But it soon became clear that their skills were so precious, that it was more intelligent to trade with them, and even to act as their protectors, than to wage war against them. Kaierouanne, like other elected Carib leaders, abided scrupu-

lously by this policy, which had, after two centuries become a tradition. This did not mean that renegade groups of Caribs did not on occasion attack the Warraus, but when they did, they were severely disciplined by the responsible Carib leaders. The Warrau villages, as meeting points for traders from far and wide, were places where one could listen to gossip while drinking casheri, and pretending, as etiquette demanded of visitors, that they had all the time in the world to listen. A Carib Chief from Tobago and another from Trinidad confirmed what Kaierouanne already knew, that the French were making preparations for a large-scale assault upon Grenada. The Chiefs volunteered to come to the assistance of their Grenadian kith and kin. One of the Chiefs was a distant blood relation of Kaierouanne. They both belonged to the Clan of the Black Spotted Jaguar. The Grenadian Chief thanked them, and assured them that he would take them up on their offer when the time came.

In the midst of overseeing every detail of the preparations for his Grenadian-invasion-by-subterfuge, Du Parquet found time to bone up on any literature he could find on tobacco growing—the kind and quantity of seed required, the type of soil, climatic conditions and irrigation best suited for this specialized crop, the control of pests, the construction of curing and storage barns, etc.—but he was not going to rely on trial and error to make this venture a success. As an insurance against failure, he purchased two African slaves who had worked on tobacco plantations in Virginia, and two others who had worked on Dutch plantations in Pernambuco. This group of four would provide the French colonists with experts in a specialized field of agricultural production, and what is more, experts who had to share their skills and experience gratis and under the whip.

\* \* \*

The study of the use of the slave experts—skilled artisans and craftsmen, workers in wood and metals, specialists in a variety of areas in the agricultural sciences and agricultural production, and master builders—by European colonizers, is a buried and neglected field of scholarship. Du Parquet's use, in Grenada, of these experts from Dutch plantations in Pernambuco, established an interesting precedent, if precedent it was, because not long afterwards, African slaves from Brazil were to introduce the art of sugarcane cultivation, and the ex-

traction of sugar and its byproducts, to the Caribbean. These slave experts had been forced to inflict a doubtful blessing upon countless generations of sugar workers when they set in motion a process that would make the Caribbean islands a world center of sugar production. But, early in the 17th century, crops like tobacco, indigo, coffee, spices caught the eye of the traders in slaves, the bankers and the speculators. Sugar was by no means one of the favorite princelings vying to be king.

It was in that early period of the seventeenth century that Virginia, an English colony, had been saved from economic ruin and raised to a position of growing prosperity by tobacco cultivation. St. Kitts, and Barbados, two English colonies in the Caribbean, also launched themselves into large scale tobacco production. In 1637 and 1638, 1.1 million pounds of tobacco from the Caribbean and 3.4 million pounds from Virginia, entered the metropolitan market through the Port of London.

Smoking, a habit that Elizabeth I, had described as filthy and had banned, had in spite of that royal prohibition, become popular with all classes. Perhaps the Virgin Queen's ban of this exotic Indian gift to the Old World had added a devilish luster to smoking and taking snuff, according to them the status of the biblical fruit; and this must certainly have delighted the slave traders, the plantation owners and the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

With the momentum of preparations increasing, Du Parquet, advertised for settlers willing to emigrate to Grenada, offering tax exemptions and two slaves for every head of a household as an inducement. Out of those who came forward he chose 203 strong men. The women who embarked on this venture were not mentioned. The provisions on the ships transporting the perspective colonists consisted of cassava bread, live turtles, salted sea-cow (manatee), peas, beans, corn, three barrels of brandy, two casks of Madeira wine, linen, iron tools, glass beads, textiles, cannons and barrels of gunpowder. Each male colonist was issued with a brace of pistols, a rifle, a sword, a bayonet and an adequate allotment of ammunition. The Governor's immediate entourage included Monsieur le Compte, his cousin, Monsieur le Fort, (the number of slaves in this colonizing venture was not listed), and his personal priest. After a four-day voyage, the colonists arrived in Grenada. Du Parquet claimed that Kaierouanne "welcomed him".

If this was the case, then Kaierouanne would have been welcoming self-proclaimed protectors against the English. But when these avowed French protectors built a fort with cannons mounted, not to repulse intruders from the sea, but to menace their hosts, any lingering doubts about their real intentions would have been dispelled.

This settlement, the first permanent European one to be established in Grenada, was called St. Louis. It was established in the area below what was later to become the site of Butler House.

Butler House, and the area immediately surrounding it, were reduced to ashes by American bombers and helicopter gunships in another invasion-by-subterfuge in October 1983, 333 years after the Du Parquet colonizing venture.

\* \* \*

Two of the African experts, taking advantage of the bustle and confusion during the early days of settlement, escaped and sought refuge with the Caribs. Kaierouanne welcomed them and smuggled them across the hills to a carbet in the north of the island. When Du Parquet's search party came looking for them, the Carib Chief declared that he had not seen the ebony men, but if any of his people ran into them he'd see to it that they were returned to the French Governor's safe-keeping. The White settlers had warned their slaves that the Caribs were ferocious man-eaters, but the two escapees, one from Virginia and the other from Pernambuco, had both dealt with Indians before and had developed a profound respect for them. Sitting in the Chief's round-house and eating from a communal pot, brought back memories of their lost home to them. They ate a stew made with crab meat and cassava and seasoned with tamaulin sauce. Tamaulin sauce was a gourmet delicacy made from pepper, lemon juice and the green meat of the crab that clung to the shell; and they washed the stew down with ouicou, a mildly intoxicating drink which was prepared by allowing sweet potatoes and manioc to ferment in a mixture of honey and water. Pere Labat claims that when he visited Grenada in 1700, a French settler had offered him a glass of this drink. This was fifty years after the Carib presence on that island had been largely erased. For very sound reasons of health, the Caribs did not eat turtle meat, pork or salt. The two former items could cause food poisoning very easily in the tropics, and for a people whose salt intake from sea-

foods, fruits and vegetables was more than adequate for their bodily needs, not using additional salt was a wise precaution.

The two Africans warned the Carib Chief not to trust Du Parquet, since his plan was to occupy Grenada and to drive the Caribs into the sea.

"We know him very well," they declared, "we've even heard him whispering to his wife in bed at night. Buy, capture and steal guns and learn how to use them, some of their own traders will sell you their mothers for gold. And learn new tactics . . . teach your young fighters to sneak up close enough to shoot flaming arrows into their powder kegs . . . and when the thunder dies down, move in and finish off the survivors. We have one advantage over them, they're afraid of us, but they also think that we're stupid and inferior . . ."

"What is it to be homeless, my brothers?" Kaierouanne, asked them, and the older one replied.

"It is like carrying a deep wound close to the heart . . . a wound and a hurt that will never heal."

"We prefer death to homelessness," the Carib Chief said.

"We will survive," the young African said, "we must. And someday everywhere, every country that Black folks live in will be free, and all the rest of the world will know that once we're there, it's a safe place because we've fought side by side with whoever yearned for freedom, to make it free--that is our destiny!"

\* \* \*

Two weeks later, the escapees were smuggled out of Grenada. They were taken to Dominica, another Carib island, where maroons had established free settlements in the mountains, with the help of their Carib hosts. Du Parquet listed the two, officially, as deceased.

Pere Labat, after his visits to Grenada and the Windwards around 1700, left us interesting asides about the Caribs.

He wrote about the eating, drinking, singing and merrymaking when a manchild was born or a canoe launched. He also mentioned the *couvade*, when Carib males, as an act of solidarity and a gesture of support, fasted, took to their hammocks and shared, by proxy, the labor pains that their wives were enduring. And as for the cannibal mythology about the Caribs, he wrote:

It is an error to believe that the savages of our isles are man-eaters and that they go to war to make prisoners in order to satiate their hunger. I have proof to the contrary.<sup>31</sup>

Slaves did the heavy work of cutting down giant trees around the lake, pulling up stumps, removing rocks, digging irrigation ditches, preparing some of the good timber for building, and burning mountainous piles of debris. When darkness fell, they were forced to continue work with wicker torches and bonfires providing an eerie light peopled with shadows. Slaves, and, in a slightly different context, Caribs, were both considered expendable.

A large tobacco plantation was established in the Tanteen area, and Grenadian tobacco would eventually become a highly prized commodity, fetching higher prices in the English market than the tobacco from other islands like Barbados and St. Kitts, which had been producing it for a much longer time.

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Within a matter of months after Du Parquet and his settlers had arrived in Grenada, frictions began to develop between Carib hosts and French guests, (the occupied and the invaders). When four young Carib women left their carbets to live with French suitors, Kaierouanne brought this and a number of other grievances to the attention of the Governor: that there had been thefts of provisions from farms; that some of the young Frenchmen made a sport of mocking and insulting the Caribs; that the Governor had sworn that he had come in peace but with every passing day French visitors, young and old, male and female, seemed to be getting more impatient with Caribs and their ways. Who were the hosts and who the guests, the Carib Chief had finally demanded. After Du Parquet had given him no satisfaction, Kaierouanne, began to subject the French colony to guerrilla attacks.

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There were higher geo-political stakes involved in Du Parquet's bid to occupy Grenada and drive the Caribs out, than profits from tobac-

co plantations. For by 1650, powerful and aggressive colonial slave societies in the Caribbean, were facing free societies controlled by Caribs and pockets of maroons. The Colonizers, whether they were English, French or Dutch, and it was the one issue on which these Imperial rivals were in accord, saw a free Grenada as a threat to their suzerainty. Slave societies and free ones could not live side by side. The settler ethic was one that never allowed for a humane accommodation between the racial chauvinism, the greed, the religious intolerance of colonizers, on the one hand, and the right of the colonized to maintain their way of life and retain their culture, on the other. Slave owners lived in constant dread of their slaves revolting or escaping. All actual and potential sanctuaries had, therefore, to be denied runaways.

Because slaves from the English colonies in the Carolinas were constantly escaping into Spanish Florida, the English created the State of Georgia as a buffer to prevent this haemorrhage of their slave property. In the Caribbean, Dominica was already becoming a maroon sanctuary. The logic behind Du Parquet's invasion-by-stealth of Grenada, was to prevent this Carib island from becoming another.

## CHAPTER TWO

The meeting of the slaves from Africa and the heroic Caribs was an important event in the history of resistance to colonialism, slavery and economic plunder in the Caribbean. But the meeting of Africans and Amerindians, in a wider context was a crucial event in the creation of a new civilization in the Americas. The Eurocentric, ethnocentric, and racist distortions which began to appear in writings about the Indian, from the beginning of the Columbian era, grew even more virulent when Africans were forcibly inducted into the New World arena. The African inherited all the racial slanders heaped upon the Indian by the European colonizer, and century after century, more were added. It is on the heads of the uprooted, enslaved and ruthlessly exploited African that racism was institutionalized. Through pseudo scientific mumbo jumbo, religious bigotry and intolerance, the manipulation of history to fit fraudulent theories of racial and class superiority, and the need to find ideological and racial justifications for slavery, an avalanche of propaganda has blurred the essentially symbiotic relationships between race and class. The African, Indian, Asian and European working class and peasantry did share a common heritage of exploitation at the hands of the same ruling classes.

The blurring and distortion of facts that show the unity of peoples, and the emphasis on issues that divide them, is part of the methodology used by the ideologues of Imperialism to divide and rule. But in that chaotic period when the Columbian era began, and classes and groups were rearranging themselves in both the New World and the Old, it is important to note that of all the peoples who came to the Americas during this Columbian era, the African more than any other understood the profound need to create a fusion of his culture with that of his Indian host's through a mutual understanding and not by aggression.

| The African brought with him, regardless of the mosaic of cultural groups from which he derived,

a built-in ethic which bound him first as a stranger in a strange land to study, respect and borrow the best from the host culture before essential elements of his own were allowed to take root. This equipped the sons and daughters of the African diaspora with the means of surviving anywhere in the human world without resorting to force and coercion. When the African arrived in the New World, he knew that the colonizer who had brought him there was a usurper who had seized the land of the Indians, desecrated the graves and the altars of their ancestors, and sent countless of the ones who had either welcomed or resisted them to the Forest of the Long Night. It was clear to the slave from Africa that, in order to escape the terrible retribution that was certain to overtake their masters, they had to make peace with both the Indians and the spirits of their dead ancestors in this new land . . . The African had to recreate his own vision of himself and his people in the universe after being violently uprooted . . . to have seen himself only through his master's eyes and to have even appeared to be an accomplice in his obnoxious deeds, would have left him with a permanent heritage of self-hatred, distorted self-images and guilt. In order to reconstruct his ontological system, the African was compelled by the logic of his cultural past, to establish a cultural symbiosis with his Indian host independent of the white man. There was, in addition, the fact that if the slave wanted to escape, the hinterlands to which the Indian was also being driven were often the safest place to find sanctuary. It was also a matter of profound significance that Africans had come to the Americas in pre-Columbian times, not as slaves, but as culture bringers, traders, medicine men and settlers.<sup>1</sup>

The slaveowners knew that whenever escaped slaves and Indians joined forces they could present serious threats to the slave system. Elaborate rules and regulations and numerous statutes were therefore designed to prevent this eventuality taking place. In spite of these, Indian/African alliances did take place, notably in the Palmares Republic in Brazil's north-east, in the Dutch colony of Surinam, in the Florida peninsula and in the Caribbean. Because accounts of the heroic resistance that the Indians of Florida mounted against the colonizer are so sparse, and their alliance with armed groups of Africans (one that lasted for over a century) so significant it might be well to look again at the history of this former Spanish colony.

Tiho Narva, in his **Rape of the Sun People**, wrote:

The conquest and colonization of Florida was perhaps the costliest in men and equipment that the Spanish were to experience in the first two centuries of the Columbian era. The Ponce de Leon, the Pamphilo de Narvaez, the Miruelo, the Luca Vazquez de Ayllon, the formidable de Soto expeditions all came to naught because of fierce Indian resistance. But since it is popular for colonial historians to record and embellish stories of their successes, and not to leave us chronicles of their failure and defeat, the early history of that troubled peninsula is noted for its omissions.<sup>2</sup>

Historians and propagandists of the colonizer would have us believe that modern American civilization established itself upon a cultural tabula rasa, and that this new civilization was transplanted almost in its entirety from Europe. At the top of this transplanted cultural pyramid is the "Superior" Anglo-Saxon bourgeois offering. Below this, in successive tiers, are other European cultural contributions; and towards the bottom of the pyramid, is the essentially trifling exotica representing Indian and African offerings. But these are not "pure", since whatever cultural authenticity they possess is due to borrowings from Europe. The truth is that new civilizations cannot create themselves in a vacuum. The new civilization of the Americas, therefore, has been built on foundations of Indian and African crea-

tive labor, and the many strands of this labor, plaited themselves into a natural organic whole with the European strands, although violent, aggressive and powerful forces were pulling them in many directions. Tiho Narva, looking at the cultural mosaic of the region as a whole, examines this phenomenon and throws new light on the subject when he writes:

In the beginning, when Spaniards and Indians encountered one another it was not so much a meeting of strangers as it was a confrontation – Spanish ruthlessness and greed pitted against implacable Indian pride and resistance. The African and the Indian on the other hand, met as human beings, both of whom were being threatened by white settlers with slavery, subjugation and possible extinction. It was obvious to the Indian that the African had not come to dispossess him of his land or to relegate him to the status of a wild beast. The African, who was also a sufferer, was willing, with the infinite patience of his race, to learn the languages of the Indians and to listen to the tales of his people. And when he was invited to do so, to tell the stories of his uprootment from the land of his ancestors . . .<sup>3</sup>

The Indian provided the colonizer with what seemed to him, quite erroneously, to be an unlimited reservoir of labor for exploiting the riches of the Americas. Because of greed, mindless cruelty and a bloodlust born of fighting against Moors for seven centuries, it only took four decades to empty this reservoir in the Caribbean, and then Africans were brought in to fill the labor vacuum.

As soon as the African was introduced into the colonizer's circus of civilization, the twin hats, one labeled "savage" the other "cannibal" which had been forced upon Indian heads, were transferred to his. However, a number of complex factors that place the African presence in the Americas in a more objective light, are more often than not ignored.

The first Africans who came to the Americas in the Columbian era did so via Spain, a fact that should hardly surprise us, since the Mo-

ors had conquered Spain for seven hundred years, and Granada, the last Moorish stronghold on the Iberian Peninsula, only fell on January 2, 1492, eight months before Columbus set sail for the New World. Moorish-Africans, therefore, would have been occupying positions ranging from slaves to members of the ruling elite in Morocco and its overseas territories. The Tuaregs, a Black Saharan people, were over-represented in the senior ranks of the military, the religious hierarchy and top administration. As relatively new converts to Islam they were among the most ardent believers.

Peter Martyr, the first major historian of the Columbian era, mentions in passing that Martin Alonso Pinzo, Columbus' chief pilot and partner in his Enterprise of the Indies, and his brothers, Francisco Martin Pinzon and Vincente Yanez Pinzon, were known everywhere in the Mediterranean world as the **Negro Pinzons**. The three brothers would have been Afro-Spanish. Charles Duff, who excavated unique material from primary sources that other scholars had neglected to examine or were ignorant of, wrote:

In a lawsuit which took place many years after his death, evidence was submitted by fellow pilots and by sailors who had navigated with him that he (Martin Alonso Pinzon) was: 'One of the most knowing men of his epoch in all matters pertaining to the sea, a courageous pilot and a great captain . . . there was on earth in his day no braver man in war.' His two brothers, Vincente Yanez and Francisco Martin, though not of the same calibre, were first-rate navigators and brave seamen . . .<sup>4</sup>

In addition to the three Pinzon brothers, another of Columbus' pilots, Pedro Alonso Niño, was recorded as having been a man of color.<sup>5</sup> After Columbus' first voyage, the chronicle of the Black presence takes on new dimensions; in 1513, thirty Negroes helped Balboa hack his way through the tropical undergrowth to reach the Pacific Ocean. There were Black soldiers of fortune with Ponce de Leon, when he set out to find the Fountain of Youth and accidentally touched on the Florida coast. Langston Hughes, in his **Famous Negro Heroes of America**, wrote:

By 1523 there were so many Negroes in Mexico that it was decided to limit their entrance since it was thought they might try to seize the ruling powers from the Spaniards – as indeed some in 1537 were accused of plotting to do.<sup>6</sup>

There was, therefore, no monolithic and docile African slave presence in the Americas, as historians of the colonizer would have us believe. It was a restless presence, a troublesome one and one that was seen from a blinkered perspective for too long. Herrera who, unlike Martyr, had actually travelled extensively in the Americas during the early Columbian era, left us a chronicle of events that further underlines the complexity of the neglected issues of the early African presence and relations between Africans and Indians. Herrera, one might add, was no friend of either the Africans or the Indians. Nevertheless, he has been able to leave us invaluable information about events that other lesser historians had chosen to ignore. He wrote that in,

1532.

The king (of Spain) had sent the force of two ships to make war on the Caribs . . . It is the general opinion that the troubles of this island (Puerto Rico) were caused by Negro slaves, Wolofs and Berbereci, and the King was asked not to send any more.

1533.

The Wolofs of San Juan were declared to be haughty, disobedient, rebellious and incorrigible, and could not be taken to any part of the Indies without express permission.

1540.

In Quivira, Mexico, there was a Negro who had taken holy ecclesiastic orders.

1542.

There was established at Guamanga, three  
Brotherhoods of the True Cross of Spaniards,  
one for the Indians and one for Negroes.

1548.

An uprising of Negroes took place in San Pedro  
of Honduras.<sup>7</sup>

The entry, therefore, of Africans into the arena of Grenadian history took place simultaneously with that of the French colonizers. But for over a century and a half before 1650, Africans and Indians, despite harsh prohibitions, were joining forces to fight against colonizers whom a Seminole cacique had aptly described as "the enemies of mankind".

## CHAPTER THREE

The Africans, after the extermination of the Grenadian Caribs by the French, were to become the natural heirs of the Carib freedom fighters when the first War of National Liberation had ended in 1654.

This war of liberation had begun in earnest seven months after Du Parquet established his Trojan-Horse colony in an area that is now part of St. George's, the Capital of Grenada. The very area where 333 years later, United States forces launched their early morning invasion of Grenada.

The first tobacco crop was harvested in 1651, eight months after the French settlement was established. Du Parquet, satisfied that the colony was on firm footing, returned to Martinique leaving his cousin Monsieur Le Compte as Governor. Du Parquet had chosen a successor who was not only a close relative, but a man of action who had fought against the Caribs in St. Kitts and St. Vincent.

\* \* \*

Le Compte did not have to wait long for Carib guerrillas to begin harassing the French settlers. A few French hunters roaming the forests far from St. Louis disappeared without a trace. When Le Compte asked Kaierouanne's help in locating those missing persons, the Carib cacique had returned a week later to tell him that they had found neither the men nor their mortal remains.

The French governor was certain that he could crush the Caribs if they attacked Fort St. Louis. The fort was strategically located to repel an attack, to counter-attack or to hold out until reinforcements arrived from Martinique. What Le Compte feared most was a long drawn out guerrilla war. His policy, therefore, became one of goading the Caribs into making the mistake of launching an all-out attack on the fort prematurely. One of the grievances that Kaierouanne raised, and one that Le Compte ignored, was that the French hunters were unconscionable in their hunting: that their guns were killing wild ani-

mals for sport and not always for food. After seven months of finding carcasses of game that careless French hunters had wounded and not bothered to track down; and after hearing the sound of gunfire shattering the primordial silences in their forests, the Caribs began to hunt the hunters.

While slaves from Africa did the heavy work in the fields, and the young stalwarts whom Du Parquet had recruited in Martinique, armed with whips, swords and pistols, took turns to serve as overseers, others hunted or went wenching.

\* \* \*

Carib attacks on French settlers became more deadly and more concerted eight months after Fort St. Louis had been established. Biased colonial accounts would have us believe that Carib "savages" were carrying out isolated acts of violence upon unsuspecting and vagrant French settlers. The Grenadian Caribs, however, saw themselves as victims of Du Parquet's duplicity, and felt that they had every right to drive out, by any means necessary, the French invaders-by-stealth, who were obviously bent on taking over their island homeland. Those colonial accounts recite a litany of Carib "atrocities" while the armed and aggressive settlers are portrayed as innocent victims. Labat wrote in his memoirs that,

Not daring to attack the French openly, they (the Caribs) determined quietly to slay all whom they found hunting in the woods far from the fort.<sup>1</sup>

The French hunters were young, armed stalwarts whom Du Parquet had recruited specifically to seize Grenada for France and to drive the Caribs into the sea. There is a Nigerian proverb which says that "dead men are always guilty," and this can serve as a motto for the colonizer, writing about the colonized. W. E. DuBois, pointed out that the colonizer's history is invariably one written by the hunter about the lion, and never that of the lion talking back and telling his side of the story.

\* \* \*

This hunter/lion analogy fits rather well when we begin to examine an account such as this one by an anonymous writer who tells us that, "a certain Monsieur Imbert, was invited to attend a social event in a Carib carbet. However, on his arrival, he was attacked and slain." One could well ask, was Imbert really an invited guest of the Caribs when he was killed? It would have been an unthinkable breach of the Carib warrior ethic to kill an unarmed guest who had been invited to attend a ceremony in a carbet. Kaierouanne would have had those responsible banished. But, we'll never know the Carib side of this story. However, Governor Le Compte, using this incident as a pretext, decided to mount a major offensive against the Caribs.

Heading a large and well armed force, he attacked one of the main Carib carbets, where he suspected that Kaierouanne, and some of his best fighters were staying. This carbet, a strategic center for the Caribs, was located on Mount St. Catherine, a high mountain with sheer precipices on all sides. The French attackers were repulsed and bloodied, and they sustained heavy casualties.

Du Parquet, hearing the dismal news, dispatched three hundred men, regulars and armed irregulars, to reinforce Le Compte's badly depleted forces. He also gave specific orders that the entire Carib nation was to be driven to the north of the island and pushed into the sea, and that no Carib's life should be spared.

Kaierouanne sent appeals for help to his Carib allies in the surrounding islands. His call was answered by fighters from St. Vincent and Dominica. They came in their swift and sleek war canoes. Kaierouanne held a War Council. There were those who voted for harassing the French; making it difficult for them to sleep, giving them no respite; but the hotheaded ones were bent on making a frontal assault on the fort and the settlement around the harbour simultaneously, and their proposal was unwisely adopted.

Prior to being drawn reluctantly into a war for survival, the Grenadian Caribs had enjoyed an unaccustomed peace for over a hundred and fifty years. Their great war leaders, sea captains and explorers were now legendary figures from the past about whom the Boyez (priests) sang in song-poem to children to teach them about the history of the Carib sagas. The training of young warriors under Kaierouanne was more of a ritual re-enactment of what had been done in the past, than a preparation for war. Kaierouanne was himself more of a peacetime leader than a warrior. He had been elected Chief, be-

cause of his skills as an administrator. Carbets were scattered all over Grenada and he had to regulate the equitable distribution of food, to build and maintain storage huts, to arbitrate in disputes between families and clans, to organize hunting and fishing activities, and trade with the neighboring island and mainland territories. He performed his duties creditably, and in the long cool evenings, he was not averse to drinking from the ouicou jars and entertaining the endless stream of visitors from other parts of the island and from neighboring islands. After his visit to Du Parquet, he had bestirred himself, and tackled the business of preparing for war pretty energetically. But, one learns the business of war by constantly engaging in it, and he had missed out on these lessons. Kaierouanne, therefore, was no match for Le Compte with his superior weapons and his military experience.

Le Compte used the Caribs' favorite strategy against them: he set up an ambush. The Carib attackers, some 700 strong, advanced on the fort with the rising sun behind them. The French defenders inside the fort were silent as the dead. They waited until they could see the whites of the Carib eyes before opening fire with cannon and musket. The first salvos decimated the Carib ranks. Before the smoke had cleared, Le Compte flung the gates of the fort open and ordered the attack. The Caribs fought back stubbornly and their three and a half foot arrows with the arrowheads tipped in machineal poison killed many Frenchmen, but the French troops spread out in a tight half-circle and swept the countryside clean of Carib resistance. Their superior weapons and their breast plates gave them decided advantages. They pursued three hundred Caribs, men, women and children, to the top of a mountain, and slaughtered eighty. The survivors rushed down the hillside like a flight of birds swooping to the Cabsterre of the island. But a group of about fifty, led by Kaierouanne, retreated to the northernmost extremity of the island. This group was pursued relentlessly by Le Compte. The Frenchman in his shining armour and plumed helmet and the bare-breasted Carib cacique faced each other. The battle had begun in Basseterre (St. George's) and now it was about to end at Le Morne des Sauteurs or Leapers' Hill. Le Compte ordered his men to hold their fire. If he could take Kaierouanne alive and have him paraded in chains around in Martinique, Guadeloupe, St. Kitts, the other troublesome Caribs would lose heart. Le Compte called on the Carib chief to surrender. Kaierouanne turned his back

on him contemptuously, and moving through the ranks of his people, touching the heads of infants in their mother's arms, he walked slowly and deliberately towards the edge of the cliff. The others, as though mesmerized, followed him. Raising his arms high, clenching his fists, he shouted the Carib battle cry "kaori homan!" and leaped over the edge. The others followed, and soon, this promontory was bare except for the trampled grass, the wild sage and the trees bent like old men's backs by the wind.

\* \* \*

In 1664, the Dominican Order laid the foundations of a church close to the site where Kaierouanne and his followers had taken their last stand.

The Carib presence in Grenada, however, was shattered, dispersed, but not completely eliminated. In 1652, a group of survivors was allowed to maintain a carbet in the Cabsterre of the island where, in 1654, this remnant of a fighting nation hosted a general assembly of Caribs from Tobago, St. Vincent, Dominica, St. Lucia, St. Kitts and Guadeloupe.

\* \* \*

The delegates at this Confederation of Caribbean freedom fighters swore solemnly to avenge the 1652 massacre of Grenadian Caribs by Le Compte. The Northern Caribs also aired their grievances at that meeting, complaining about the depredations of buccaneers, renegades, pirates and settlers from Europe. Together, the groups agreed to engage in guerrilla warfare in as many islands of the archipelago as possible; to attack the plantations and to invite the slaves from Africa to join them. The plans which were formulated by the Assembly, were put into effect once the delegates returned home.

\* \* \*

This united Carib effort was, in fact, a serious threat to European power in the area, but somehow, all that colonial historians have recorded of this threat is that in St. Vincent, two Jesuit priests named Aubergeon and Gueimu, were killed while celebrating mass and that these gentlemen of the Cloth died at the feet of a handful of Carib converts.<sup>2</sup> It is a hoary tradition that if the deaths of priests or nuns at

the hands of "natives" are recorded, these pious victims are invariably reported to be killed while celebrating mass. One, therefore, reading these accounts, wonders whether during those centuries of European colonization, priests and nuns have been doing nothing but celebrating mass?

But it was reported that after the 1654 Assembly had met, many attacks were unleashed on the settlers leaving them frightened and in disarray. Governor Le Compte, that merciless foe of the Caribs, with a force of 150 well armed men, advanced rapidly to the Cabsterre of the island and carried out a surprise attack on the carbet which was the last outpost of indigenous resistance in Grenada. In his characteristically thorough and genocidal fashion, he spared neither women, children, the aged, nor even the livestock. Then, splitting his troops into groups, combed the woods, forests, and streams for Carib fighters. Afterwards, except for a handful of stunned survivors, the Caribs ceased to exist as a race of any significance in Grenada. Yet, amongst their remnants, were a few who carried four things that continued to signal who the Caribs once were as a people: a caracoli (a sacred amulet that the bravest warriors once wore); a sacred panpipe; a mask of the clan of the black spotted jaguar; and a little wooden statue of the Icheriri, the good spirit (usually worn around the neck), who was the protector of Carib souls.

In his moment of triumph, Le Compte, returning to Fort St. Louis, lost his life by drowning while trying to save one of his men who had fallen into the sea. Monsieur Louis de Cacqueray, Sieur de Valminiere, succeeded Le Compte as Governor of a Grenada from which the Carib presence had been erased.

## CHAPTER FOUR

The sequel to the wars of extermination against the Grenadian Caribs is that the Caribs of St. Vincent continued, as they had agreed to do at the 1654 Convention, to harass the French, whom they now hated bitterly. They attacked plantations in St. Kitts and Martinique, burnt crops and barns, set slaves free; and carried out hit-and-run raids against Grenada so effectively that Du Parquet was forced repeatedly to provide military aid for the colonists.

\* \* \*

As soon as the wars against the Grenadian Caribs had ended, tensions, which had been submerged since the establishment of the French settlement of St. Louis, began to surface. Captain Le Fort and Major Le Marquis both felt that either one or the other of them should have been appointed Governor of Grenada instead of the effete Valminiere, whom they held in low esteem. He had not distinguished himself as a soldier and they were convinced that he had little to offer apart from his aristocratic airs. Some of the settlers sided with Valminiere, but the majority, who felt like Le Fort that they had left France to escape from the tyranny of aristocrats, took his side. Du Parquet, hearing about the crisis in Grenada, sent peremptory orders to Le Fort and his followers, commanding them to acknowledge Valminiere as Governor. And to underline the fact that he meant what he said, he dispatched 100 well armed-Walloon soldiers who had recently served in Brazil under the Dutch States General. Together with the Dutch, they had been expelled by the Portuguese when the former recaptured Pernambuco in 1654.

\* \* \*

These Walloons had a great deal in common with the rebellious soldier-settlers whom Du Parquet had sent them to suppress. The for-

mer had fought in Brazil to re-enslave Africans who had escaped, and to exterminate Indians. The slaves in Pernambuco, most of them from Angola, had seized the opportunity to escape while the Dutch and Portuguese were fighting each other for the possession of that colonial prize. The Portuguese had armed some Africans, but others had seized arms from both contestants and, together, these Africans who had abolished their own slavery, had established the Palmares Republic, the first free Black Republic in the Americas which lasted for a hundred years. Palmares, and the Carib-dominated Grenada, had much in common, and so did those who suppressed those free societies. After 72 attempts to crush Palmares during the hundred years of its existence, the Portuguese finally succeeded in 1699. They felt that this free Black Republic would threaten the entire slave society in Brazil if it was not destroyed. In the final assault upon the main Palmares fortress, the last of its Black defenders, including women and children, rather than be captured and re-enslaved, leaped over the high cliffs to their death.

\* \* \*

The Captain of the Walloons, upon arrival, proceeded to Le Fort's house to hold discussions with him; but Le Fort refused to open his door, whereupon it was broken down. Some shooting ensued and a few members of the opposing parties were killed while others were wounded. But Le Fort, and Le Marquis, were finally overpowered and were both arrested and imprisoned. While in prison, Le Fort, fearing that he would be sentenced to an ignominious death, took poison and ended his life. Le Marquis was sentenced to death, but his sentence was later commuted to banishment by Du Parquet.

\* \* \*

The wars to crush the free Carib society in Grenada had been costly, and the continued harassment of Grenadian plantations by the Caribs from St. Vincent had been a drain on Du Parquet's finances. By 1657, his balance sheets showed losses far outweighing profits, and he saw no prospects of the situation improving in the near future. Devas, quoting a French source, said that the "Caribbees proved to be the irreconcilable enemies of the French and that their frequent insur-

rection at last obliged Du Parquet to sell Grenada,"<sup>1</sup> a step that this consummate entrepreneur took in 1657 when he sold the island to the Compte de Cerillac for 1,890 livres. What a paltry price for so many Carib lives!

The Governor, installed by de Cerillac, proved to be tyrannical and incorrigible, forcing many of the French settlers to emigrate to Martinique. But the vanished Caribs seemed to have left seeds of rebellion in the Grenadian soil, for the remaining colonists arrested the Governor, tried him and sentenced him to be hanged. The condemned man pleaded that he was a scion of the nobility, and preferred as one with blue blood, to be beheaded. These colonists, who had butchered and exterminated a whole nation of Caribs, claimed that there was none among them with the expertise to use an executioner's axe, so the Governor was shot.

When news of this rebellion, and the summary implementation of a peoples' justice, reached France, the French Court, no doubt alarmed by what they perceived to be a dangerous precedent, dispatched a warship and a commissioner to investigate. But, when this Royal Commissioner arrived in Grenada, he was told that those who had taken part in the trial and execution of the Governor, had all emigrated and no one who had been responsible could be found.

Once the Caribs had been exterminated, Grenada could be bought and sold without let or hindrance. It had become what Du Parquet had set out to make of it: a piece of French-owned real estate. In 1644, the King of France passed an Order in Council transferring the rights of the Company of Islands of America to the French West India Company. The new company was given full authority to a) develop the French Antilles, and b) monopolize all trade between these colonies and France.<sup>2</sup> The cunning and ubiquitous Du Parquet was, of course, involved up to the hilt, for, along, with Houel and de Cerillac, he had shares in the new company, and the three were appointed governors of the established islands by the directors. But de Cerillac did not seem to be as adroit in dealing with the metropolitan authorities as Du Parquet was. He ran afoul of Monsieur de Tracy, a Commissioner sent out by the same company to look into the affairs of Grenada. De Tracy compelled him to sell his shares in Grenada to the French West India Company for 10,000 crowns, and he had to wait a year before he was actually paid.

\* \* \*

The colonists brought many valid complaints to De Tracy about the disarray that was threatening to overwhelm them in Grenada. The commissioner listened to them sympathetically, he could see for himself that all was not well. The first step he took to remedy the situation, was to dismiss the Compte de Cerillac. The latter was not amused, but De Tracy was after all, a royal emissary, and as such, had the authority to hire and fire, from the most eminent, to the lowliest of officials in the Empire in the name of a King who ruled by divine right.

\* \* \*

This friction, which created differences in caste, class, race, color and nationality in the Caribbean, had begun to surface from the very beginning of the Columbian era. Columbus' sailors, whom Charles Duff described as "exconvicts, rascals and lawless fellows, most of them" openly showed their doubts about his judgment, as they sailed further and further West; and some of them had even grumbled and muttered about rebelling on that historic First Voyage. On the triumphal Second Voyage, hidalgos, peasant-soldiers, vagabonds and elements drawn from marginal groups of every description, had vied with one another to crowd aboard the seventeen ships about to set sail for the Indies. But once arriving in Hispaniola, they became sulky and unmanageable when they discovered that they could only survive in this new Hemisphere of chance by the sweat of their brows. They wanted gold, and riches and slaves; they also wanted to free themselves from the stultifying grip of the repressive state apparatus in the home country. So, very early, they were, like Le Fort, and Le Marquis, in the Grenada of 1654, faced with a contradiction that persists to this day: they could not act as collaborators with, or surrogates and agents of oppressors, and themselves, be free. As Dessalaines, the Haitian revolutionary had warned Toussaint, you can't just prune the tree of slavery and colonialism, you have to pull it up by the roots.

De Tracy appointed Monsieur Vincent as Governor of Grenada, and departed for France on November 29, 1664. A decade later, in 1674, the French West India Company was dissolved and Grenada came directly under the authority of the French Crown.<sup>2</sup>

While the French monarchy, and its royal bureaucracy became more and more ossified, French explorers, traders, settlers, with Je-

suit, Capuchin, Dominican and priests from other Catholic Orders following close at their heels, were probing vast new areas of the St. Lawrence basin, the Great Lakes, the Mississippi Valley, Cayenne and the Antilles. De La Salle, standing on the shore of Lake Erie could, for the first time, finally feel truly free. In France, he had felt everything pressing in upon him—the monarchy, the neat landscapes, his snobbish and greedy family, and the peasants and workers being crushed like stalks of sugarcane for the juices of their labor—while on that North American Lake, heaving like an ocean before him, he could feel the excitement of vast primordial spaces besieging his imagination, challenging him, in a way the Old World had never done. And yet, he was doing all this in the name of the King. Poma de Ayala, in his history of the de Soto expedition, tells of an Indian cacique who had asked de Soto why he was fighting for some distant monarch; he would have had more respect for him, he had declared, if he had been fighting for himself and his people, the way he, the cacique, was doing. The Indian mind could not grasp this devotion to a transAtlantic deity in human form, for even the Great Spirit the cacique worshipped had to be close by and constantly accountable to those revering him.

When Grenada came directly under the authority of the French Crown, Jean Baptiste Colbert was the King's Minister in charge of the administration of all overseas territories. Colbert had a mandate to pour more revenues into the royal coffers. The king's demands for money were endless and Colbert had enemies at Court who would dance on his grave if he failed. He set about rationalizing the structure of the colonial administration, centralizing it. He cast covetous eyes on the lucrative Dutch trade with the French colonies which amounted to 2 million livres of sugar, 1 million livres of cotton, tobacco and indigo. It gave employment to 6,000 seamen plying back and forth in 200 ships.<sup>3</sup> With a stroke of the pen, Colbert decreed that all Dutch ships should be banned from French colonial ports or risk confiscation. French colonial trade was to be a monopoly of France. But the logic of the market dictated otherwise. How could there be a monopoly with wide open seas, hundreds of scattered islands and islets, and thousands of hidden coves? Besides, at every turn, there were Caribs, smugglers of every ilk, ex-convicts, thieves, wreckers, escaped slaves, buccaneers, and venal officials who would create an alternate economy based upon smuggling. So, opposing Colbert's de-

cree were complex forces that would render it unworkable in the Caribbean before the ink dried on his signature. Colbert's blueprint for empire building was a perfect document, on paper, but to make it work he would have had to "dissolve the people, and elect another" and this would have had to be done both at home and overseas. He was, in fact, building superstructures of oppression on top of a volcano. In less than a century, the volcano would erupt in France, in Haiti, in Martinique, in Grenada, and things would never be the same again. The sans coulettes in France, the tricolor banners calling for liberty, equality, and fraternity; and Toussaint and Fedon, the leaders of slave rebellions in the Caribbean, would for moments in history, be united against their common enemy, the metropolitan ruling class and its colonial surrogates. And, even after their revolutions are beaten back, betrayed, the seeds of anger that they scattered far and wide would germinate and grow again, and again . . .

Poring over Grenadian historical records, one is confronted with a parade of names of Governors, jurists, military and naval officers, priests, legislators and colonial officials. The working people, now and then, appear as a statistic along with cattle and horses. The **Grenada Handbook** tells us that in 1700 there were on the island 835 inhabitants (excluding isolated pockets of Caribs); these included 257 whites, 53 free mulattoes and 525 black slaves. Most of these slaves were employed on the island's 3 tobacco, 6 sugar, and 52 indigo plantations. The livestock on these estates amounted to 64 horses and 569 heads of cattle.<sup>4</sup>

There were, therefore, more than two slaves to every one French settler. These peasants with crude manners about whom Labat had written so disparagingly in his memoirs, had been recycled by their colonial experience and had emerged as a new class of land owners and the possessors of slaves. One also learns from this seemingly innocuous recorded fragment, that suspended in an uneasy equipoise between masters and slaves, in 1700, were 53 free mulattoes.<sup>5</sup> They are destined by the logic of their Janus-status (one that places them astride two worlds) to be tugged this way and that by social and political forces and the cross currents of Anglo-French rivalries, for centuries. The term "mulatto" will eventually become a synonym for attitudes and ways of thinking and behaving in Caribbean society, and will have little to do with miscegenation. Those 53 mulattoes were officially free, but there would have been at least three times

their number who would have been classified as slaves. This Janus-class would eventually come to know in its bones that the only way of creating a free society for everyone, was by joining forces with the slaves and wresting power from the masters. These free mulattoes could go to France or England as students and be accepted there, but once they returned to Grenada, the white planters greeted them with ridicule and studied cruelty, and their lot was sometimes, in their own eyes, more trying than that of slaves. Ninety-five years later, Julien Fedon, a landowner and member of this Janus-class, would brush aside the memory of the petty humiliations he had suffered at the hands of uncouth planters—French and English; and inspired by the ideas of the French Revolution, would head a united front, one that included ex-slaves, free blacks and mulattoes, maroons and a sprinkling of English deserters from the colonial armed forces, French planters and other elements. Fedon forged them into a revolutionary army and attacked the slave and plantation oligarchy. But it was not just an intellectual process that led him step-by-step to his conclusions. For he had worked side-by-side with slaves and free men on his estate, through drought, or rains monsooning the landscape for months on end; wresting the hillsides from scrub and iron-hard acacia thorn bush; terracing them to plant coffee, cotton, tobacco and indigo. And day-after-day, feeling the sun like a branding iron on his back; and in the big house, when he was having his ease, he saw images of those field slaves with whom he had worked, mirrored in the complexion and features of his father and mother; and listening to the old men and women from Africa, he had, through their soft and eloquent words, caught a glimpse of the mysteries, and made the acquaintance of their hidden sorrows.

In 1700, when he visited Grenada, Labat tells us in his *Memoirs*, that there were still Carib carbets on the island.<sup>6</sup> These were remnants of families that had once again infiltrated into the Cabsterre of the island. The priest mentions that there was a carbet not far from Diamond Estate, and adds that there were others. These were “tolerated” by the French, he explains, since they kept the colonists well supplied with fish, venison, fresh cassava, ouicou (the Carib beer mentioned earlier), pigeons, ramiers, ground doves, grieves, parrots, perriques, tatoos and agouti . . . thus providing most of the animal protein for the colonists.

## PART TWO

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# Slavery and the Fedon Rebellion

## CHAPTER FIVE

The Church was like skin around the bone and sinew of French colonial power. The priests participated in everything—Jesuits, Capuchines, Dominicans and other Catholic Orders rivalled one another for land, for riches, for dead souls and live ones, and for slaves, whom they bought and sold like so much merchandise.

Even before Du Parquet had ventured on his perfidious colonizing mission, priests had been visiting Grenada. De Testre and Labat had been prowling around the Carib-held islands in the Windwards and Leewards like spies of God; their knowledge of the territories, and of the indigenous people, was invaluable to the traders, the soldiers, and the settlers who followed in their wake. It was this very hierarchical second Estate with its medieval ecclesiastical courts, still condemning innocents to the most barbarous forms of torture and death in the 18th century, that had aroused Voltaire's ire; and from the barrel of his pen had come deadly salvos. He had opened his attack by declaring that the first priest had to have been the first knave who met the first fool.

But the Church in the 17th and 18th centuries, vast and powerful as it was, was not a monolith. It was riddled with internal contradictions. There were rich and powerful priests, and there were the poor, wretched and neglected ones; there were principled ones, and there were venal and corrupt ones. It was those downtrodden priests to whom Robespierre had appealed so persistently. Through his paper, and from his seat in the Convention, he sharpened their understanding of their own oppression. He knew that once he had won them over, he would have on his side apostles for the revolution who were as close as sweat to a pore to the most despised elements of the peasants and the working class.

On the eve of the Fedon rebellion in Grenada in 1793, Ninian Home, a planter, wrote a letter to Alexander Campbell in England complaining that one Father Pere La Point [sic] (the name was misspelled) and other priests were actively fomenting dissention and stirring up trouble in the slave ranks<sup>1</sup>. So, Grenada, too, had her share of

activist priests, not unlike those to whom Robespierre's inflammatory journal had been constantly issuing a call to revolt. One snatches this item from a document in the Grenadian colonial archives with a patina of dust covering it, and roaches scampering away when one touched it.

Du Parquet had taken his personal priest along with him to Grenada on his mission of ethocide, and there were undoubtedly other priests with the main body of settlers. They were, however, all mute about this grisly venture. Obviously, there was no reincarnated Las Casas among them. The Governor, once the Carib presence had been eliminated, gave land to the Dominicans; they left shortly afterwards and were replaced by the Capuchins. But, by 1721, the Dominicans had returned, since the Capuchins had fallen into some disfavour with the authorities. They (the Dominicans) took up residence once more on their estate at Grand Pauvre (a curious setting for such a wealthy order).

By the end of the 17th century, Grenada was divided into six parishes, and rivers and streams were used as boundaries to define and separate them. The parishes were: Basseterre (St. George's), Gouyave (St. John), Grand Pauvre (St. Mark's), Sauteurs (St. Patrick's), Megrin (St. David's), and Marquis (St. Andrew's). The Paroisse de la Basseterre, extending from the Riviere Chemin to the Riviere Douce, was the principal one. The area from the Pointe des Salines to the Riviere du Chemin was considered dry, and arid and short of water, except for wells and its salt ponds.<sup>2</sup> The town was originally called Fort Louis. It grew up around the original fort Du Parquet had built. In 1705, Governor de Bellair moved the town to the western side of the harbour. It would fill, as it grew and prospered, the natural amphitheatre that sloped down to the water's edge, and could be defended more easily from the hills overlooking its natural harbour. A French engineer, Monsieur De Caillus, designed a new fort with battlements rising steeply and following the natural curve near the crest of the hills, and it was built with slave labor. Many of the anonymous builders who erected this enduring structure died or were injured while they labored under the whip, but no memorial was erected to commemorate their sacrifice.

The fort, having been completed, was renamed Fort Royal and the town that was spreading out in a wide arc below it, bore the same name. In 1763, the British, to whom Grenada had been ceded, re-

named the Fort, Fort George,<sup>3</sup>, and the town became St. George's.

By the first quarter of the 18th century, Grenada had been surveyed by the French (they estimated its area as being 60,146 acres) and neatly divided up into administrative districts. Forty soldiers and their officers were garrisoned in Fort Royal, and as part of their duties, they carefully codified the water resources, the rivers and streams, and noted the cycles of rainy and dry seasons. The island of Grenada was ready to be exploited. Tobacco and sugar remained the principal crops until 1714, when cocoa, coffee and cotton were added to the list. These latter crops expanded significantly during the next three decades, with coffee eventually taking the lead. However, it should be noted that Grenadian tobacco at the time was a highly prized commodity which fetched double and triple the price of that grown in other Caribbean islands.

By 1753, there were 83 sugar plantations, 27,525,600 coffee trees; 150,000 cocoa trees; 800 cotton trees; 5,740,450 trenches of cassava; and 933,596 banana trees. There were also 2,298 horses and mules, 2,456 head of horned cattle; 3,278 sheep; 902 goats and 331 pigs. But, there were 11,911 slaves, 179 free negroes and 1,262 whites; six churches and one hospital.<sup>4</sup>

Eleven thousand, nine hundred and eleven (11,911) slaves! That is a buried statistic, and yet it is the most important element in this long list of plantations, trees, livestock. These slaves, many of them working eighteen hours a day, and to use a vividly appropriate term that Walter Rodney had coined, **humanized** huge acreages, and transformed, not only the physical landscapes, but also the landscapes of profits and production for the plantocrats. Every tree was mounded, planted in areas from which forests had been cleared. Elaborate irrigation systems were established, ponds dug, water catchments built to last for centuries and feeder runnels, like veins and arteries in the living body of the plantation, were skillfully engineered on hillsides so that the flow of water could be checked in the rainy season and fed to the thirsty land in the dry season. And, when the saplings were growing into trees, they, the field slaves, had to go from tree to tree, crushing insect pests that were attacking the plants with their bare hands, the way European farmers had done in medieval times. Their ranks were constantly depleted and the vacancies filled again and again with fresh batches of slaves from Africa. The planters expected to get ten years of work from an able bodied slave, then the worn out, bro-

ken human chattel could be cast aside. Sometimes, the slaves sang. The masters said that it was a sign that they were happy (to be worked to death, whipped, chained and denied every vestige of human dignity), but they were singing to keep from dying inside—the singing kept a flame burning in the innermost casements of their invincible hearts. Drumming, was more often than not, forbidden. The masters did not understand the language of African drums. They suspected that the drums could speak an incendiary language of protest and rebellion; or could send messages from end to end of the island in spite of their prohibitions. They did not know that the African heartbeat and the drum had intricately synchronized rhythms, and that each by itself had a life of its own; or that every slave carried the drum's incendiary message inside him. On clear nights, some of the fortunate ones, if they listened intently, could hear the distant echoes of abengs (conch shells) trumpeting messages in the mountains where the Maroons lived, and for a moment, they would share the freedom of those brave ones vicariously. But the field and house slaves, the slave artisans, skilled and semi-skilled workers, fought back against the tyranny of their enslavement. They used fire to write declarations of independence across night skies, torching crops, barns, factories, stables. The women lured planter Cassanovas to their slave huts, plied them with alcohol and set them up for the men to attack them. Slaves sabotaged machinery, maledicted in the fields, sometimes they deliberately injured themselves; they maimed mules, donkeys, work horses. When caught, they were whipped, broken on the wheel, burnt alive, had limbs amputated or their noses or ears cut off. Sometimes, they used poison as a weapon against master and mistress alike, or ground up broken bottles and slipped the powdered glass into their food.

More than half of the slave and Free Black and Mulatto population of Grenada was killed or wounded during the Fedon Revolt. That meant that the participation of this group was almost total. And yet, we're only told about 300 black mercenaries (Rangers) who fought with the slave oligarchy to re-enslave their kith and kin. Steadman, a Scottish Colonel, after leading a company of Black Rangers in Surinam in the 19th Century, ended up by having little but contempt for his mercenaries, and an unsparing admiration for the Maroons against whom they were fighting. But, there were no Steadmans amongst the British forces opposing Fedon, or if there were, they left

no diaries for us to pore over. Another option of resistance opened to the slave was to escape; to abandon the plantation and join the Maroons. George Brizan, a Grenadian educator and historian writes,

... running away or vagrancy . . . remained the main form of slave resistance in Grenada . . . By the 1790s, there were well established bands of Maroons . . . however, the books written so far have not devoted any attention to them.

West Indian historians in writing about . . . Maroons have so far restricted their discussion to the Jamaican Maroons and the Bush Negroes in Surinam. The impression one gets is that the Maroon movement was confined exclusively to those territories, but that was not the case.

During the second half of the 18th century a strong runaway slave movement developed in Grenada. These runaways subsequently banded together to form maroon communities in the interior of the island. This . . . constituted one of the chief methods by which slaves resisted the dehumanizing and oppressive conditions on the slave plantation . . .

As a result of the increasing numbers of slaves who succeeded in running away . . . there grew up in Grenada two distinct settlements of runaway slaves—one in the wooded interior of St. John's parish and the other in the highlands of St. Andrew's and St. David's.

The maroon settlements seemed to have started towards the end of . . . French colonial rule . . . and . . . grown during the first three decades of the British colonial rule. As early as 1765, Governor Robert Melville in a letter to the Lord Commissioners for Trade and Plantations, spoke about the existence of runaway slaves in the hills of Grenada. Later that year, in a letter to the Planters of St. John's, he described them as Grenada Maroons.<sup>5</sup>

But, an important and hidden facet of slave resistance was the way in which they kept essences of their African culture alive. They told folktales to their children, and every tale had a thinly disguised moral lesson, guidelines on how to resist and outwit oppressors, how to survive against daunting odds.

Sangura, the hare, in East African folktales, became Brer Rabbit. The transAtlantic journey transformed Brer Rabbit into a folk archetype in the New World. By himself, he was weak, but as a member of a united community, he could defeat powerful predators, like the eagle or the jaguar. Then, there was Tortoise, another folk archetype. On land, he was slow and clumsy, and seemed to move his head from side to side stupidly, like a buffoon. But he had phenomenal stamina on land or in water, and underwater, away from inquisitive probing eyes, he had grace and speed. And, once he had retreated inside his hard shell, he could resist attack from powerful foes. Tortoise was also a creature of the Antaeus legend, for once his shell was wedded to the earth, he was safe from attacks by the eagle. If the eagle tore him away from the earth and hoisted him aloft, his protective shell could be smashed on the rocks. And of course, there was Anancy, the spiderman, with his agile brain and clever wiles, this trickster could always outwit the strong and the powerful. Finally, the Wax Girl from the folktales of the Teme, of West Africa, became the Tar Baby in the New World. Tar is black as the night is black, the colour of the African complexion. Once tar remains soft and pliant, it is indestructible. Tar can be molded into any shape, and an enemy can wear himself out raining blows on a lump of this substance. Tar is only vulnerable when it hardens, then it can be smashed into small pieces. But, the pieces can be gathered together, and when melted in the fire, can take on a new life. These tales with their double meanings were told and retold within earshot of the masters, who considered them infantile and harmless.

The tight reins of centralized control from Paris, for the benefit of France, and not always in the best interests of the colonies, was having its effect in Grenada. The royal tax collectors were like a plague of vampires; that is why the French colonial auditors left us records of every tree, every head of horned cattle, every goat, every pig. The Sun King, with his enormous and costly entourage of courtiers, his mistresses, his palaces, had to dazzle Europe with the splendor of his royal trappings and he needed more and more money. The royal tax

gatherers would have ruined the Grenadian plantations if the planters had obeyed the law. But, they hadn't. A substantial illicit trade with the Dutch continued to flourish. But smuggling, apart from the risk of being caught and prosecuted, had hidden attractions for the slave, who inevitably took part in the secret dealing on his master's behalf. By taking part, he was exposed to the world of outlaws. Outlaws and Maroons had a great deal in common. They both had to learn how to outwit a repressive state apparatus and to survive in a Kingdom of Chance. To survive as a Maroon, the runaway slave needed, not only superb fighting skills as a guerrilla, he or she also needed to know the art of illicit trading. To survive in the mountains, one needed guns, ammunition, tools, livestock, seed, and agricultural implements. The planter was always taking grave risks when he involved the slave in his smuggling operations. For even if the slave did not escape or contemplate escaping, the very fact that he and his master were involved in a dangerous and unlawful activity, altered their relationship, giving the slave a subtle hold over his owner.

By 1763, there were, in Grenada, 81 sugar plantations, 208 coffee plantations plus another 21 lying fallow. Basseterre, had 13 sugar and 35 coffee estates; Gouyave, had 10 sugar and 38 coffee; Grand Pauvre, 6 sugar and 26 coffee; Sauteurs, 18 sugar and 29 coffee; Marquis 23 sugar and 29 coffee; and, Megrin, 11 sugar and 27 coffee.<sup>6</sup> Sugar was more labor intensive than coffee, but on the whole, in the mid-18th century, when Grenada was poised to become one of the principal centers of agricultural production in the Eastern Caribbean, the master-slave relationship bears looking at and examining. In the six parishes, there was a proliferation of estates and small settlements. There were, however, no gigantic plantations, owned by absentee companies and run impersonally by overseers, managers, book-keepers and a highly developed apparatus of repression. In the Grenadian master-slave relationship, therefore, the cruelties and the numerous punishments, were highly personalized. The two, master and slave, lived together in a symbiosis of tyranny and resistance; and this intimate pattern of repression by the few, and resistance by the many, in a fetid social and psychological hot-house, had much to do with shaping the national character. In this unhealthy atmosphere, the tensions were fed by hourly, daily, weekly' resentments which built up year after year under a deceptively bland surface, until they

exploded like a volcanic eruption. The patterns of these resentments were as invisible and difficult to trace as veins under black skin.

In the welter of savageries, of greed and exploitation, the women in the Big House, the Free Colored and Black women, and the slave women, faced problems of their own. The wives of the masters were property, like livestock, land, buildings; and they were only more valuable, because, as sexual objects and mothers, they produced the offspring who ensured that the system of inheritance functioned smoothly; and that property remained in the family from one generation to the next. Under French law, too, the Marriage Contract, which was solemnly signed before the wedding took place, gave husbands absolute power over their wives' property.

The French and creole wives in Grenada were slaves in gilded cages, pampered, petted, and indulged at times, but slaves just the same.

There were remarkable individuals amongst them, like Julien Fedon's wife and daughter, who fought side by side with him as revolutionaries. But accounts about the heroism of these women are even fewer than those about rebellious slaves. Sometimes, all we have to go on is a single vituperative sentence, condemning them, and then we know that the opposite was true. But it was a fact that their wrath was often, as is the case so frequently with the oppressed, misdirected. They saw the slave women, the Free Coloured and Blacks, as sexual rivals and sometimes inflicted unspeakable cruelties upon them.

The Free Coloured and Free Black women were both a part of the Janus syndrome, since they lived astride two worlds: a twilight one between slavery and freedom, and the slave world itself. Some of them were manumitted as a result of liaisons with plantocrats, but the majority bought their freedom by diligent, hard work-trading, huckstering, farming, working their fingers to the bone as seamstresses, being on call day and night as domestics, and being nursemaids to their masters' children. They had to be cunning, resourceful, disciplined and patient to make it through that labyrinth between slavery and the twilight zone of the Free person of Colour. The Chinese have a saying that women hold up half of the sky, in Grenadian slave society, the Free Coloured and Black women, and the slave women, between them, held up two-thirds of the sky.

Here is an interesting account of the actions taken by one of these remarkable 19th century leaders:

In 1831, the Free Coloureds led by Frances Danglade, a Free Coloured woman, rioted through the streets of St. George's in a demonstration against the inequities of their class and in open defiance of the magistrate. As a result she was imprisoned for 10 days. The Secretary of State was later informed of the incident.

A year later, on December 22, 1832, the local legislature was advised to pass laws to remove from the Free Blacks and Coloureds all civil and political disabilities up to then under which they laboured. They were now allowed to give evidence, in all cases; they were given the right to elect their own representatives to the assembly and to be members of the Grand Jury.<sup>7</sup>.

The British Secretary of State must have been advised that the groundswell of support for Frances Danglade, was far greater than the demonstration had indicated; and that acceding to those demands could prevent a more general unrest from surfacing and getting out of hand. The slaves, waiting in the wings and watching this drama unfold, knew that Frances Danglade had won a skirmish but the battles to end slavery and colonialism were still to be fought. Seventeenth, 18th and 19th century prints invariably depict Free Mulatto and Black women as caricatures of white colonial ladies decked out and gaudy as toucans in their outlandish outfits; and the captions under these prints quote them as speaking an infantile creole.

In literature, they are portrayed as over-sexed, mindless beings whose sole ambition in life is to end up as the jilted mistress of a rheo-plantocrat who will inevitably return to his chaste European lady-love. There were shrewd and brilliant individuals in the ranks of those Free Coloured and Black women, however, who despite the restrictions, the racism and the social taboos hemming them in at every turn, emerged to become movers and shakers in the corridors of power at the height of slavery. Josephine Bonaparte was one of them, and so was Elizabeth Ketchley, the constant companion of Mary Lincoln, the wife of the most famous of United States Presidents; then there was Bess Taylor, the brilliant and politically astute mistress of Thaddeus Stevens, when Stevens was the most formidable opponent of

slavery in the U.S. Senate during the Civil War-Reconstruction period. Josephine Bonaparte became Empress of France, but she never forgot her Caribbean roots, and kept up a friendly correspondence with Toussaint L'Ouverture, the Haitian revolutionary leader for many years. Another one of those outstanding women was Tanta Dumas, the mother of General Dumas. Like Josephine Bonaparte, she hailed from Martinique. The General, Tanta Dumas' son by a French Count, chose to use her name rather than his father's. He swore that he and his descendants would make the Dumas name more famous than that of any scion of the French nobility had ever been. Between he and his sons, the promise was kept very faithfully. Alexander Dumas, one of the most prolific and famous of all French authors, was the General's son: and the General himself was immortalized as the character Athos, in **The Three Musketeers**. As though that was not enough accumulated fame for one family, Alexander Dumas Fils, author of **The Lady of the Camellias**, was to become even more famous than his illustrious father in French literary circles.

\* \* \*

These women were often cantankerous and sensitive about the real and imagined status they had won for themselves, but the advanced elements in their ranks knew, like Fedon and his wife and daughter had done, that their freedom and that of the slave from whose ranks they had come so recently, were indivisible.

\* \* \*

The slave woman inhabited another level of the limbo-world of the colonial slave society. The Carib women had died side by side with their men. The African women, however, worked beside theirs, doing the same heavy field work that males had to do; and, in addition, bearing children, and fighting like tigresses to hold their slave families together. In addition to all this they were forced to share the milk from their bosoms with the children of their pampered mistresses. One of the privileges they enjoyed, when they were pregnant, was that they were buried in a hole in the earth so that only their shoulders could be exposed to the bite of the whip. The child they were carrying in their womb was the property of the master, and would become a valuable commodity in the slave market.

Work on a plantation, for men, women, and children, began at 5 a.m. and ended at 7 p.m. During harvesttime, it was normal for slaves to work an 18-hour day. The mortality rate for male and female alike, was high. In 1771, the slave population of Grenada was 26,211; between 1771 and 1808, over 29,000 slaves were imported, yet by 1833, the slave population had declined to 23,536, some 3,000 less than it had been 62 years earlier.<sup>8</sup>

Side by side with the men in the heaving darkness of the slave ship, allotted a space no larger than the inside of a coffin, chained and fed like wild beasts, those captive African women journeyed to Grenada. The monotonous dirge of wind and pounding Atlantic tides ended when the ship cast anchor in the Grenville harbour or at Fort Royal. For those who had survived the crossing, one ordeal was over, and another would begin. They were brought out of the hold. This poem from **Sea Drums In My Blood**, catches some fleeting essence of the traumatic experience:

*Survivors of the crossing  
sun-blinded  
chained limbs still caravelling  
to an ocean sea's diurnal roll  
the moving earth  
rose up to touch uncertain feet  
green hills like mothering bosoms  
cleft with valleyed mysteries  
reached out to welcome them  
but, O, the pink men with their greedy eyes  
were keepers at the gates of hell.  
How kind the hills, the wind, the stars at night!  
How cruel those who vampired Grenada's riches!<sup>9</sup>*

Dragged out of their coffined berths, hosed down, fed and oiled, they were led to the auction block. Both the French and the British deposited their quota of black cargoes on Grenada's shores. Between 1650 and 1808, 1.9 million slaves were brought to the British West Indies, and 1.6 million to the French Antillean colonies.<sup>10</sup>

The figures on Grenada's slave imports leave huge gaps to be filled. Where did these slaves hail from in Africa? What specific

groups and nations did they belong to? What was the exact proportion of males to females?

The slave was, in fact, internationalized by slavery. The slave owners, seeking greener pastures for profits, and chasing a chimera of a stable slave society, would move to Louisiana, the Carolinas, Cuba, Brazil—the choices were wide and varied, and they invariably moved with their slaves. Slaves were their human collateral, their black gold. Then there was the constant business of buying and selling slaves, who once purchased, could be taken anywhere by their purchasers—to any colony in the colonial world, or to England, France, Spain, Canada, the United States.

In 1763, 1,594 slaves were imported into Grenada; between 1784 they totalled 9,752; in 1802-1803, 2,190 more arrived.<sup>11</sup>

The very word “slave” has, by constant usage and habit, come to refer almost exclusively to males. Monuments to slaves show men in chains. There are few monuments erected to honor female slaves. They are anonymous, silent victims in this rape of human creative labor.

The methods of disposing of human cargoes varied. Sometimes, the entire cargo would be consigned to a single planter; on other occasions, the Captain would sell the slaves at a public auction called the “vendue”, and this was the most widely used method of sale, and the most popular, since prospective buyers could send their spies to sniff out good bargains in advance. Mothers and fathers had to use cunning wiles, which often did not succeed, to keep their families together. The most barbarous and inhumane method of disposing of a slave cargo was known as “the scramble”. All maimed slaves would first be separated from the rest and auctioned off; the healthy slaves would then be sold for the “scramble fee”—a fixed price for men, women and children, agreed upon in advance. The slaves were then herded into an enclosure, and at the sound of a bell, the purchasers would rush into the enclosure. Whomever they seized, man, woman or child, was theirs.

For the Africans, after the trauma of the crossing, the sight of these demented beings clawing at their limbs to tear at their bare flesh was a never-to-be-forgotten experience. In 1788, seven years before the Fedon revolt, slaves from the ship “Alexander” were scrambled in St. George’s. The tragic sequel to this inhuman charade, was that the female slaves, horrified by the onrush of buyers, fought back, felling

some of their tormentors, tearing at their faces; others escaped over the high fence; of these, a few, who were later apprehended wandering aimlessly around the town, had escaped permanently into a safer world of perpetual madness.

In 1773, the slave population of Grenada was 26,211; in 1779 it had grown to 35,000; in 1788 it had fallen to 26,775. In 1817 it was 28,029, and then the decline continued, in 1820, it was 26,899,; in 1825, 24,897; in 1830, 23,878 and in 1833, 25,536.<sup>12</sup> A demographer, looking at these figures, could draw interesting conclusions, but what is obvious, is that the high points in this trade in slaves coincided with the rise of sugar as the pre-eminent commodity in the world market. But at the very time that this lucrative sugar industry had reached its peak, its economic, social and political foundations were being eroded. The 1776 American War of Independence dealt it a blow from which it would never recover. The thirteen colonies which, under the British Crown, had been a captive market, once free, would look to their own interests. But we are rushing ahead too swiftly. We need to look at a number of events and developments that would contribute to, and feed those discontents and led step by step to the Fedon revolt.

## CHAPTER SIX

In February 1763, the 9th article of the Treaty of Paris confirmed that Grenada was ceded to England; and in October, letters of patent were issued, creating the new government of Grenada. They stated that,

Comprehending the island of that name together with the Grenadines, St. Vincent, Dominica and Tobago, and providing for councils and assemblies of the representatives of the people therein in such manner and form as is used and directed in those colonies and provinces of America; The legislatures created are empowered to pass laws of England and the governor shall create courts of justice with the rights of appeal to the privy council.<sup>1</sup>

This official jargon, with its convoluted sentences, and its measured attempt to make what is simple, obscure, has not changed very much in three centuries. Bureaucrats, in what was formerly the far flung British Empire, have adopted the use of this kind of official jargon, with a passion bordering on idolatry. Translating this document into English, one learns that white adult male “representatives of the people” are to be elected and nominated to councils and assemblies, and that Grenada, the Grenadines, St. Vincent, Dominica and Tobago, would be federated and governed from Grenada.

The new governor, General Robert Melville, arrived in Grenada December 13, 1764 and tried to set up a general council for his federation. Planters in Dominica and the other Windward islands grumbled and carped and resisted. They wanted to remain big fish in small ponds. Besides, they resented these colonial Governors coming down from England and trying to rearrange their fiefdoms. Melville retreated and set up a House of Assembly for Grenada and the Grenadines.

Elections were held in 1766. During the first session of the house, a bill was introduced "For The Better Government of the Slaves . . ." A quarrel ensued. The assembly was dissolved.

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For the slaves, this transfer of power meant a reshuffling of slave masters; a change of anthem and flag, but no respite from the bite of the whip on their backs. They had wind of this imminent handing over of Grenada to the British well in advance of its taking place. There had been much agitated talk in the Big Houses, and some of the masters had been packing to leave Grenada for Louisiana, Haiti, Martinique, Guadeloupe, and France. In the midst of the confusion and uncertainty of the planters, a number of slaves, particularly in St. Andrew's and St. John's, escaped to the hills with guns, food, seed, tools, agricultural implements and clothing. The women carried seeds in their hair. They boasted that they had "obedient hair." The whites had "unruly hair" which the wind could blow in any direction. Their soft hair could not serve as garners for starting life in a new place.

\* \* \*

No wonder, the first bill introduced in Governor Melville's Assembly had dealt with the better government of slaves and ways of staunching the haemorrhage of runaways escaping to the hills. Slaves had always used these confused periods of the changing of the colonial guard to their advantage. Acara, the literate and cynical leader of a slave rebellion in Berbice, in 1765, had stated that it was merely the replacement of one white Caesar by another, when colonies changed hands.

The slaves in Jamaica established their first Maroon base while the British were taking over that island from the Spanish. When the Dutch States' General seized Pernambuco from the Portuguese, the Palmares Republic came into being. When the British invaded the Dutch colony of Suriname, large groups of runaways joined the maroon ranks, making them so strong and so audacious, that they could infiltrate Paramaribo and free shiploads of slaves who had recently arrived.

By 1769, six years after the English had taken Grenada from the French, British planters had already monopolized the most profitable sector of the economy of the island—the sugar plantations; they owned two-thirds of these plantations while the French owned a third. But the French still owned the great majority of small farms which produced coffee, cocoa, cotton, indigo and tobacco, and this allowed their representatives to hold the balance of power in the Assembly, such as it was. This august colonial institution was usually elected, because of property qualifications required of a voter, by roughly one and a half percent of the adult population. In 1769, the assemblymen consisted of one alien, one member who was under-aged, five who had no qualifications to be there, three army officers, four Frenchmen who did not speak English and six absentees. Later, laws would be passed to compel bona fide members to attend sessions or to pay fines.

But, while French Roman Catholics and English and Scottish Protestants were bickering in the Assembly, Grenadian slave labor was producing 179,200 pounds of cocoa, 1,285,700 pounds of coffee, 368,032 pounds of cotton and 65,669 hundredweights of sugar (all in one year's time). And fifty-one ships were plying between Grenada and the Port of London. By 1775, a peak year, Grenada exported 190,000 cwts of sugar, 2.4 million pounds of coffee and 142,000 pounds of indigo.<sup>2</sup>

Slaves, more slaves! To produce and produce and produce, while in England, they consumed and consumed. In 1776, while the American War of Independence was in full swing, 18,293 slaves in Grenada, on 106 sugar plantations, were producing an average of one hogshead of sugar per slave, in addition to huge quantities of coffee, cocoa, cotton and indigo.<sup>3</sup> If payments for these products had remained in Grenadian coffers, Grenada would have become the richest territory on earth. While the planters squabbled about trivia in the Assembly, it was business as usual on the plantations.

Between 1769 and 1779, Grenada became the fourth largest exporter of sugar from the British West Indies, surpassed only by Jamaica, Antigua and St. Kitts. The Grenadian economy also had a more diversified economic base – its highly productive coffee, cocoa, cotton, indigo and tobacco estates. When the other island economies, which were almost totally dependent on sugar, began a disastrous downward slide, the Grenadian planters, despite the Fedon revolt,

could still hold on to illusions of prosperity. In the sixteen years from 1763 to 1779, Grenadian exports of sugar and rum alone, poured revenues of around 1.1 million pounds sterling into the coffers of the British Treasury.

Eric Williams points out in his **Capitalism and Slavery** that the profits from Caribbean sugar provided the capital accumulation needed to finance the Industrial Revolution.<sup>4</sup> The British, inheriting Grenada on the eve of this island's great surge of prosperity had added a jewel to the English crown!

The labor of Grenadian slaves helped to make Britain one of the world's leading industrial countries. But as the British colonizers bled Grenada to the bone, they ensured that they would finally leave it underdeveloped and limping backwards into the future. It is no wonder that during the era of this island's prosperity, the Imperial powers, France, England, Spain, Holland were dancing around the islands of the Caribbean, playing a game of musical chairs. The French seized Grenada from the Caribs in 1652, a hundred years later, the English snatched it away from France; the French recaptured it in 1779 and held it until the 1783 Treaty of Versailles handed it back to England. In the Imperial game of musical chairs, it was as though Grenada was a coveted seat to commandeer during the sudden pauses in the music.

As the graph of production climbed steeply during that second half of the eighteenth century, so did, on the one hand, the intensity of the repression mounted by the Grenadian planters, and on the other, the fierce resistance of the slaves. The Fedon revolt did not fall upon Grenada like a stone from the sky. It was rooted in a century and a half of discontent. The English Governor, Melville, a General, with a soldier's mentality, wasted no time in making the apparatus of production and repression more efficient. The first Act that he had the Assembly pass was one "For the better government of slaves and for the more speedy and effectual suppression of runaway slaves."<sup>5</sup> This was followed by another Act, which made all slaves articles of real estate subject to inheritance, and which declared all widows to be dowable to them (the slaves), in the same way that lands, houses and animals were.

The latter Act was passed to clarify the dense and cumbersome French laws of inheritance. It was a sop thrown to the English planters, and a mild slap on the wrist to the French, who, after all, were the losers in this round of musical chairs.

Laws, statutes, by-laws, proclamations! The plantocracy in Grenada and the rest of the colonial slave societies in the Caribbean, used them like Japanese parasols to protect themselves from the burning lava of the slaves' wrath, that was about to rain down upon their heads. In 1770, the law to protect the articles of inheritance like land, houses, livestock and slaves, was amended to provide for due compensation to the inheritor or administrator in cases where tenants for life may maim, destroy or disable a slave. The compensation was three times the value of the slave maimed or destroyed.<sup>6</sup>

That dilatory, Grenadian Legislative Assembly, whose members sometimes unabashedly elected themselves, bestirred itself when these members suspected that threats to their property were imminent, and passed a draconic law "for preventing those who shall wilfully fire, burn or destroy canes, dwelling houses or any edifice."<sup>7</sup> Further, it was expressly forbidden to carry any fire, lamp, lighted torch or candle, or to smoke tobacco, in any sugar-cane field. Any slave found violating this law was publicly whipped. If the offender was a free person he was fined five pounds; if a free negro negligently caused fire to any house he was to receive such public corporal punishment as a Justice of the Peace should think fitting and proper; if a white person committed the same offense, he was fined twenty pounds. However, if any person maliciously burnt or caused to be burnt or aided or advised in the burning of any mansion, mill house, boiling house, wharf house, or any ship, sloop, canoe or any piece of sugar-cane, plantain walk or any coffee, cocoa or cotton trees, he was adjudged a felon and if found guilty was killed without the benefit of a clergy.<sup>8</sup>

The planters escalated the repression in the 1780's. A law stipulating that a cage should be built in Carriacou, to help to preserve public peace, was passed in 1785. It was eventually built at a cost of three hundred pounds and placed under the supervision of a magistrate. Before long, there were cages in every parish. Laws were passed empowering every employer of slaves to keep one white man for every fifty slaves he owned. The owners of canoes and boats were ordered to take out licences to ensure that these would not be used by slaves to escape or to be carried off from Grenada. It was illegal for any person to sell or give arms to a slave. Drums or other hand instruments were not to be played by slaves after ten o'clock at night. Slaves found in St. George's between 9 a.m. and 4 a.m. without a pass

were to be apprehended and taken to the cage. If a slave was found dancing in any public place in Grenada he was to be arrested and imprisoned for the night . . . the evidence of one white person was enough to convict any slave or group of slaves. The practice of obeah was expressly forbidden, and was punishable by death or transportation. The possession of poisonous drugs, pounded glass, parrot's beak, dog's teeth, alligator's teeth or any other material used in witchcraft was a crime punishable by death . . . The planters and their wives were often far more superstitious than the slaves. In the midst of condemning black magic as a primitive superstition they lived in terror of spells being put on them by their slaves. Dancing, gaming, swearing, drunkenness, drumming were all "crimes" punishable by 25 lashes. Apart from the drumming, the other activities were the backbone of the planters' lives.

If they were whipped for these offenses, the courts would have had to organize night-and-day teams to administer the whippings. And the law about having one white indentured servant for every fifty slaves, was inadvertently integrating the oppressed. Indentured servants were often worked to death more ardently than slaves. Their tenure in the maw of productin was shorter and every iota of work had to be squeezed out of them. They, too, often tried to escape, but for every one day that they were absent, ten were added to their term of thinly disguised forced labor. The lot of private soldiers and ordinary seamen was also an unenviable one. They were whipped, bullied and brutalized by their superiors. No wonder batches of them deserted and joined the ranks of Fedon's revolutionaries.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

The sugar-cane plantation was a highly developed agro-industrial unit of production. The canefields were laid out close enough to a centrally located factory to cut down on transporting the harvested crop to the mills, but far enough away, so that if the cane was set on fire the factory would be safe. On a typical Grenadian sugar plantation of 1200 acres, one-sixth of the land was in cane, one-eighth in pasture and three quarters in woodland (a combination of scrub and forest). As a precaution against the spread of fire, to make crop rotation easier and to ensure that work teams functioned efficiently, there was a certain symmetry in which the land was laid out in relation to the factory, the sources of irrigation water, and whether the land was flat or sloping. The arable land was divided into three to five large cane fields, each of which was subdivided into plots of from five to twenty acres. Gaps of twelve to eighteen feet were generally left between each plot to serve as a roadway for ox-carts which transported the harvested canes to the mill. The subdivision of canefields made it easier to apportion task work such as holeing, planting, dunging and harvesting more efficiently. In addition to canefields forests and pastures, as part of the factory complex, there was a boiling house, a distillery and a large workshop where coopers made casks and general repairs and maintenance work was done. The factory and field operations were synchronized to rhythms of production which continued year after year in response to the demand for sugar, rum and molasses. Long before sunrise, the overseers knocked on the doors of the slave huts. The slaves emerged, and after hasty ablutions were on their way to the canefields. They had breakfast in the mid-morning, five or six hours after their working day had begun. Their mealtimes were described as tea, breakfast and dinner. Bush tea, a crust of bread and fruit, when it was in season, a full meal for breakfast, and, if they were lucky, another full meal in the evening. If one measured the intake of calories and the expenditure of energy, one would be forced to conclude that it is a miracle that these slaves could have survived.

The rhythm of seasons also determined the rhythm of work. The rainy season started in May or June, and to take advantage of the rains, the holeing, planting of both cane and ground provisions and weeding, which was a never-ending task, was done. Trenching and holeing were the two methods used for planting the cuttings from the canetops. Trenching involved digging long trenches, laying a double row of cuttings, and then covering them with earth. As the soil became depleted and its fertility reduced, holeing became more common in the 18th century.

The slaves were organized like an army to attack the land in three waves. In the first wave, were the strongest men and women. They did the heavy work. Holeing was a technique introduced by the slaves from West Africa, it was one used extensively in the cultivation of yams. Each hole consisted of a trough five inches deep and five feet square. Depending on the kind of soil, a good worker could excavate up to eighty holes in a ten-hour day. A stupendous feat for those 'lazy negroes'! That meant excavating half a ton of earth. If that earth from the holes, trenches, and irrigation ditches were piled up in one place during the years of slavery, a man-made mountain higher than the St. Catherine's peak could have been created. Two cuttings were laid in the center of each hole and lightly covered. As the canes sprouted and grew taller, the hole was filled with earth and compost which was then mounded. The second wave consisted of older slaves, and those who were crippled or injured, and the third, of children. The second and third waves did the weeding, and then moved on to work on the provision grounds, to tend the cattle and livestock, and to cut and fetch wood. They grew corn, sweet potatoes, yams, eddoes, peas, a variety of beans, and both the sweet and bitter cassava.

The technical workers in the factory were all slaves – they were mechanics, coopers, blacksmiths, boilers, carpenters. These craftsmen also did superb work with wrought-iron. The Haitians have still retained the skills that the other descendants of African slaves in the Caribbean have lost. The Iron Market in Port au Prince, remains a monument to the African creative genius. The slaves were also sugar chemists, architects, master builders.

In order to sanctify their myth about negro inferiority Imperial writers, chroniclers, historians and diarists have deliberately concentrated on the field slave or the "faithful" house slave; and contemporary

defenders of imperialism are still trying to give spurious scientific underpinnings to their racist fantasies.

The main piece of machinery in a sugar factory, was the three roller cane crusher, the invention of a Sicilian in 1449. Water-power, wind-mills, horse, and ox-power provided the energy to turn the rollers. One slave, the feeder, fed canes to the crusher, whilst another, the receiver, gathered the crushed stalks and passed them back to extract the residual juice. During the grinding season, when the need to extract the juice – (the sugar-cane lost some of its sucrose content if it was not cut and processed into juice within a matter of weeks) – the feeders, forced to work long hours, sometimes dozed off, and ended up loosing a hand or an arm to the crusher. This slave blood and bone and sinew, mixed with frogs, snakes and sundry insects, would finally end up in the silver sugar bowls of the planters, or those of the English middle-class ladies entertaining guests at tea parties. This grisly addition also flavoured the rum and molasses. The sugar, of course, was flavoured at every stage by the slaves' sweat.

In that highly organized unit of capitalist production – the sugar plantation – the master and the slave had diametrically opposed interests. The one hungered for profits, self aggrandizement, power over other peoples' lives; the other wanted freedom from slavery and colonial oppression, and the right to rejoin the human race. Implicit in this latter right was the prerogative of using one's labor for the benefit of mankind. When Kofi Abram, the leader of the slave insurgency in Florida was asked what he was fighting for, he had replied "For the liberation of all mankind."

He had understood better than Lincoln that "a house divided against itself cannot stand." Lincoln, when he said this, had been talking about the slave South and the Industrial North in the United States, but Abram was talking about the world. Slaves, once they had abolished their own slavery, understood the global nature of oppression. Abram had spoken these words in the eighteen fifties. Martí, the ideological father of the Cuban Revolution, a man ahead of his time, could, also in the 19th century, through his writing, explain to all Latin America, the threat that U.S. expansionist impulses posed, and compel the insular Spanish-speaking sector of the Western Hemisphere to see its struggle for liberation from oligarchs from a global perspective.

Sugar was a bitter-sweet product for the Caribbean. For centuries,

it clung like an incubus to this region, sucking the life-blood of the slave, indentured and haltered labor that produced it. The basic technology of sugar production in the British West Indies remained largely unchanged for centuries. Initially, slaves from Brazil, a pioneer in this field, had been brought to teach sugar technology to West Indian planters. The steam engine was only used marginally in Grenada towards the end of the 19th century. In 1876, there were 6 ploughs and 7 steam engines on 75 of its sugar plantations. On the whole, they continued to rely on wind, water and ox power. With an industry that had fallen permanently from its pinnacle in the world market, and with new and more advanced techniques being used by competitors in Cuba, Java, the Phillipines, Louisiana, the Grenadian planters clung to old and inefficient methods of production. What they needed, basically, was not so much the introduction of new technologies, but the intelligent updating of old ones. They could have checked their slide to bankruptcy by using water and wind power on a larger and more efficient scale; by continuing the tradition of establishing a diversified agricultural base, and by liberating their plantation workers from the semi-feudal peonage in which they found themselves trapped after their emancipation from slavery.

The Caribbean planter class never seemed to be able to discover what the modern farmers on the ancient Mediterranean island of Crete had done, that if one windmill did not produce enough power, then ten, twenty, or hundreds of windmills could.

In the 18th century, Grenadian sugar was produced in the following manner: The juice from the crushed cane stalks flowed through lead pipes or a gutter to a cistern in the boiling house. These cisterns were either made of stone or they were vats built by the resident coopers and carpenters. The liquid was then heated in three or four copper boilers placed in the stone furnace at the narrow end of the boiling house. The first boiler was 4 feet wide and 3 feet deep; the others were progressively smaller, until the last one, the "teach" or "tatch" was only 20 inches wide and 18 inches deep. Wood, charcoal, bagasse (trash from the crushed cane stalks) and, at times, imported coal were used to fire the furnace. The raw juice, pouring out of the cistern, was strained through a basket lined with hair cloth. It was then poured into the clarifying copper, boiled and stirred, until the impurities rose to the surface. These were removed by a slave using a long handled skimmer. Lime water was added—there were invari-

ably orchards of lime trees on every plantation – to speed up the chemical separation that was taking place. The thickening liquid was then taken out of the first copper, strained through a woolen blanket and placed in a wooden box full of holes. The liquid sugar in the last boiler was emptied into wooden troughs and allowed to cool. As the surface crystallized, it was stirred repeatedly. The viscous mass would then be shovelled, either directly into wooden hogsheads or into earthen moulds. After cooling and being left for thirteen or fourteen hours, the sugar crystallized into a single lump, and the plug at the bottom was removed for the molasses to drain off. Since steam from the coppers fouled the sugar, it was necessary to use a separate building to enhance the curing process. The curing house was a long narrow building where the moulds were set upon earthen-ware pans, “drips”, to catch the rest of the molasses. These moulds were taken to the “knocking room” where they were turned upside down, and the sugar removed. Sugar, varying in color and quality, was found in each mould: a brown top layer, a black bottom layer and a white, dry middle layer.

The heat in the factory was sometimes so intense that slaves had to take turns to douse one another with buckets of water. It was a labor-intensive operation, but it took the highly trained, skilled workers to make it work successfully. A single wrong move could lead to a serious accident, or to a spoilt end-product. At unacceptably high temperatures, the human brain loses the capacity to give the right commands to the limbs. Some slaves, therefore, had to take turns to stand in a cool spot to keep an eye on the workers close to the furnace or in the curing house. If those “watchers” noticed workers suddenly acting strangely, they would snatch them away from danger. They were not always in time.

Workers who were boilers, masons, coopers, or mechanics usually received better treatment from their masters. Their skills were too valuable to be jeopardized by the kind of brutality and mistreatment that the field slaves were constantly subjected to. And these skilled workers sometimes turned out to be leaders of slave revolts. Of course, when one says “skilled workers” in relation to slaves, the categorization has to be more general than if one was talking about workers in an industrial society. Toussaint was literate, and a good administrator; Dessalines and Christophe, both brilliant field commanders,

learnt their martial skills and honed them in the heat of battle; Kofi, leader of the 1765 slave revolt in Berbice, was a cooper; Kofi Abram, a leader of the Black-Seminole insurgency in Florida in the 1850's, was a blacksmith; Fedon, the leader of the Grenadian revolt of 1795, was a highly-educated land owner and Free Mulatto.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

Child labor was an intrinsic part of the slave system in Grenada. Children worked in the fields planting and harvesting, they tended the livestock (when the planter made his rounds on horseback, he invariably had an entourage of slave children trotting behind his horse); they cut and fetched wood; and they worked as domestics in the Big House. It was not unusual for a planter to present his wife or mistress with a slave child (a blackamoor) as a household pet; these children passed from infancy to adulthood without an intermediary period of childhood. Their irrepressible, youthful spirits were soon curbed by the whip and by labor. They were cheated of their childhood. The pampered offspring of the planters, however, remained children or at best retarded adolescents, all of their lives. It was as if their black nursemaids deliberately subjected them to a surfeit of pampering so that when the Day of Reckoning came, they would be no match for their tough slave adversaries.

There are no statistics about the number of slave children living in Grenada in the late 18th century. But census figures show that in 1861, 27 years after emancipation 271 were employed on estates. After this time, the numbers increased until they reached 1,435 by 1866, and 3,050 by 1878.<sup>1</sup> Even after the Compulsory Education Act became law, in the Caribbean, the demand for seasonal labor by backward plantations and permanently high unemployment made a mockery of this law that looked so good on paper. During harvesttime, men, women, and children had to work in order to increase the meager annual cash earning of rural families, and the schools were emptied of pupils. The School Inspectors would have had to prosecute most heads of families in the country districts. They chose instead to look the other way.

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British and French fleets, renewed their game of musical chairs in the Caribbean in 1779. The two Imperial powers were at war. The British were still sulking over France's assistance to its breakaway North American colonies. The British fleet, under Vice-Admiral Sir John Byron, left its temporary base in St. Lucia to provide an escort for a convoy of merchant ships sailing north to St. Kitts. Count d'Estaing, in command of the French fleet based in Martinique, receiving word of this, attacked and captured St. Vincent. D'Estaing, reinforced by naval units and troops under Commodore La Mothe-Picquet, would have moved to capture Barbados, but the Trade Winds were blowing hard, and making it difficult to sail due east to that island. He, therefore, changed his mind and set sail south for Grenada. Lord MacCartney, the British Governor, after some blustering, put up a token resistance and surrendered. D'Estaing commanded 25 ships of the line, 12 frigates, and 6,500 troops. MacCartney's forces numbered around 700. In the final, rather brief engagement, the French forces had stormed Fort George (now Fort Rupert), the citadel above Hospital Hill, and captured MacCartney and his officers, along with the jewelry, silver plate, and other valuables they had taken there for safekeeping.

On July 7, 1779, the King of France appointed Jean-Francois Compte de Durat, Governor-General of Grenada. This French pro-consul immediately issued a proclamation full of bile against the English. The French planters, whom the British, with a supreme irony had officially designated as "new subjects", (they had been in Grenada since 1650 and the British took over in 1763), had obviously filled the Governor-General's ears with their complaints against the deposed Anglo-Saxon rulers. The proclamation declared:

Being informed of all the oppressions exercised  
by the British Government particularly against  
the French inhabitants of Grenada called the  
new subjects in contempt of the capitulation  
of the colony on 4th March, 1762, of the Peace  
Treaty of Paris of 1763, . . . in contempt of natural  
rights and the right of nations . . .  
. . . and seeing that these vexations have done  
an injury which has extended to all members  
of the colony we have from now onwards and

forever absolved the inhabitants of Grenada from payment of all mortgages and pledges of every kind contracted between them in the London market and in other places of commerce without any exception reserving to the Court of France to make good all claims just and established resulting from this announcement.

Moreover, it is forbidden under penalty, in case of disobedience, of military execution and confiscation of their goods, to all and each of the inhabitants of Grenada to pay anything of what they have or may owe to the subjects of His Britannic Majesty whether directly or indirectly.<sup>2</sup>

The Compte de Durat, however, was not merely penalizing the British for their discriminatory treatment of the French planters in Grenada, through this proclamation, he was depriving the British Treasury of 1.1 million pounds sterling in revenues from sugar, plus five times that amount in ancillary financial benefits including additional revenues from cocoa (239,400 lbs. exported in 1778), coffee and cotton, mortgage payments, interests on loans and a hidden network of business deals between mother country and colony.<sup>3</sup> The 40 ships which had been plying between England and Grenada during the previous year (1778), would have to trade elsewhere. The French were commandeering the spoils for themselves. They had seized much more than jewels and silver plate. At the foundation of Grenada's wealth was its slave labor. The Compte did not say a word about slaves in his proclamation, but he knew they were there. They were a silenced majority carrying the society on their backs. Without their labor, Grenada would have been a useless island bauble not worth fighting over. He could wax indignant about the "oppressions exercised by the British Government . . . against the French . . ." But slaves and serfs were chattels. There were still laws in France, in 1779, which permitted a French aristocrat after a hunt in winter, to disembowel a serf, and to warm his cold feet in the blood and gore while the heart of the dying man was still beating. Perhaps this grisly practice had been discontinued, but the law remained in the statute books until the 1789 Revolution swept it into the oblivion it deserved. The

Compte would chastise the English creole planters, but not too much. Besides, the planter class in the Caribbean was very adroit at changing sides. Their first loyalty was to their property. When the Emancipation Proclamation was imminent, they had threatened to secede rather than lose their slaves – to invite the French or the Dutch or the Americans in, it didn't really matter whom.

Waiting in the wings, while this drama of one Imperial power taking over from the other was being acted out once more, were the slaves who were not so much the silent majority, as the silenced one. When the 1763 changeover had taken place, they were not as well-organized as they had become twelve years later. The markets had become important meeting-places for them. Under the watchful eyes of spies, informers, constables, clerks, they were able to send messages to all parts of the island. And since the English had never bothered to learn French, and many of the French refused to speak English, by mastering dialects in both languages they could confuse listening ears. Their ancestors had known markets in Africa from ancient times, and in Grenada, they Africanized the markets. Slaves from everywhere in the island could meet and socialize. A listener outside the market could hear it humming like a beehive, and the humming was constantly punctuated by laughter that sounded as natural as water gushing out of a spring. That laughter hid the secret glooms and sorrows of an uprooted people. In the midst of that laughter with its flashes of ivory eyes and ivory teeth, one sometimes caught a glimpse of sadness that passed as swiftly as a small rain cloud across the sun's face.

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The markets provided a good example of how the planters' greed could override considerations of security. They knew that any meeting-place, public or private, could provide slaves with a forum for conspiracy against the slave system; but they also wanted to save money by letting the slaves fend for themselves. If they were allowed to do some huckstering in the market, under strict supervision, of course, they, the planters, who were required by law to provide food, clothing and shelter for their slaves, could ignore this statute without the fear of being penalized.

The establishment of markets, on the other hand, made the impending revolt more certain, and it was not going to be a fragmented revolt which the Parish Militias could strangle in its cradle; after the initial eruption, the molten magma of the people's wrath would engulf the entire island and the fallout would reach neighbouring ones. The French invasion lifted the lid of slave repression momentarily, and groups of slaves escaped to the hills. Then there were individual acts of defiance.

A pregnant woman working as a weeder in the canefields of the Grand Bacolet Estate, complained about feeling ill. The overseer ordered her to continue working. She refused. She was dragged to the whipping hole. The overseer in the midst of whipping her, found himself facing a dozen angry Amazons. The culprits were eventually apprehended and given an exemplary punishment. A Free Coloured female attempted to hand the Compte de Durat a petition protesting the treatment of her peers by the authorities. She was arrested and imprisoned, but was released shortly thereafter when a delegation of French creole landowners approached the Governor-General and explained to him that the woman was the wife of Monsieur Valerie Duquesne, a prominent member of the French-speaking community. The lady was released after the husband was admonished for not keeping his house in order.<sup>4</sup>

A British Governor would not have dealt as leniently with the lady, and the fact that she was the Free Coloured wife of a French planter would not have been all that much of a help. But the two women, coming from widely different backgrounds were like human barometers showing the rising pressure of discontents. There was much talk about these incidents in the Saturday market. The market, apart from being a forum, a social center and a setting for conspiracy against the slave system, was also a living peoples' theatre and it always had its clowns, its storytellers and its star performers. One of the latter, a free black woman named Gamay, occupied a central stall in the St.

George's market and was known throughout the island. Gamay was a creolized form of the French "grand mere". In the French-based language that the slaves spoke, words appealed more to the mind's ear than to the mind's eye, and to make the French language sing the tunes they wanted to hear, the Africans, who created this creole deleted the r's. In the Grenada of the 18th Century, Gamay was a title of honor. Those who survived the hardships and the terror of slavery and could live for half a century or more, were treated with a respect bordering on reverence. There was, in addition, the fact that the African tradition of respect for elders remained a deeply ingrained one; and, in particular, this habit of respect for grandmothers continues to play an important social and cultural role in Black communities everywhere in the Americas, to this day.

The short interlude of French rule, 1779-1783, ended with Grenada being handed back to Britain. The 8th article of the Treaty of Versailles stipulated this, after some political arm-twisting by the British negotiators. A faltering French monarchy was in no position to hold on to the Caribbean possessions its navy had seized as prizes of war. British accounts claim that the Compte de Durat had "ruled in a most despotic manner" and that "British colonists were heavily oppressed." The slaves, if they were consulted, would have attested to the fact of their being heavily oppressed, but as far as their British masters were concerned, they would have considered their claim of being victims of oppression, to be greatly exaggerated.

Durat had begun, during his four-year tenure, to build a number of forts, and the planters, both French and English, had grumbled about the low prices paid by the government for the slave labor it requisitioned. These planters might have seen eye-to-eye on this question of the government underpaying them for slaves it was hiring from them, but on other issues they were poles apart. French rule and the restoration of British authority, exacerbated the quarrels between the British and French colonists. The bones of contention between them were land and religion. Colonial historians have invariably highlighted the latter when, in fact, both factors had been inextricably woven together from the moment the British had seized Grenada from the French in 1763. The British planters had always felt that their home government had been too accommodating and generous with the French landowners. They were all for expropriating every square meter of

French-owned land and dividing it among themselves; and for them, land and slaves were like fruit from the same tree.

The French administration packed up and left towards the end of 1783. The Compte de Durat would soon have to face the wrath of the French people when the 1848 Revolution burst upon France like a hail of thunderbolts. The slaves in Grenada would discover that they had allies in France; that the yoke, pressing down so mercilessly upon their black shoulders, was one that curved across the Atlantic and fastened itself with the same unbearable weight of inhumanity and greed upon the white shoulders of French serfs, lackeys, peasants, indigent priests and workers.

## CHAPTER NINE

Edward Matthew, the new British governor, arrived in Grenada and took over the French. He quickly set up an Assembly and a Council. The British planters bombarded him with a surfeit of complaints about how badly the recent French administration had treated them and he listened sympathetically. However, he had been instructed to grant French subjects the same civil and political rights they had enjoyed prior to the 1779 invasion. Heading the group of protesters were the ultras, those protestant zealots who with an excess of blind passion, would end up looting and destroying Catholic churches in several Grenadian parishes, and inadvertently pushing some French landowners who might have otherwise demurred, into the ranks of Fedon's revolutionary army. But in 1784, as a concession to these ultras, Matthew appointed Ninian Home, their leader, to the Supreme Court as an Assistant Justice. Home was later appointed Lieutenant Governor from 1793-95. He was an implacable foe of Julien Fedon and the revolt was to bring the two face-to-face in a deadly confrontation.

After the ignominious defeat of the British forces in Grenada by the French in 1789, Matthew, decided to improve Grenada's defences. He completed the forts that the French had started building, created an elaborate road network "from the interior estates, to churches, markets and landing places, and he regulated the comings and goings of foreign vessels by designating the harbours of Grenville and St. George's as the ports of discharge. But the roads were a double-edged sword: they made it easier for troops to move with their equipment to any part of the island, but they also were going to provide Fedon's insurgents with better lines of communication. In addition, there were other public works. The governor established markets in St. George's, Grenville, Sauteurs, Gouyave, Victoria, Megrin and Hillsborough. The Public Parade, an area close to the waterfront, and one where many roads converged, was chosen as the permanent site for St. George's marketplace.

The marketplaces in other towns were to be chosen by Justices of the Peace. The Governor appointed clerks of the markets,

... to keep scales and weights and settle disputes between buyers and customers ... meat that was . . . unfit for sale was . . . sent to prisoners or given to the poor . . . it was illegal for slaves to sell rum . . .<sup>1</sup>

Gamay, the Free Black marketwoman, not only presided over the central stall in the St. George's market, she, from time to time, visited other markets, and after a while became the most widely known and the most prosperous of the island's vendors and traders. She had been a slave on the Belvedere Estate, and, publicly, did not have a good word to say about the Fedon family who owned it. A French Captain, who had smuggled Gamay and two of her children out of Grenada in 1796, and taken them to Haiti, along with two young women, whom they claimed were distant relatives, had left us an account which fills some of the voids in Fedon's family history. The Captain's name was Louis Point du Sable. He was a French settler in Haiti, and a Jacobin sympathizer. Here are his jottings, based on what he gleaned from Gamay, during the voyage from Grenada to Haiti. His ship's log records that during this voyage they were careful to touch only at French or Spanish ports.

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Anglo agents and spies were looking everywhere for-General Fedon. If they had to lift up the lid of the sky to find him, they would have done it. If those Anglos only knew the cargo I had picked up in those rough seas off Carib's Leap! I was ferrying to Haiti, a tigress of the revolt, and three cubs—Gamay, and her three young women. Two of them, no more Gamay's relatives than I was, said only what they had to say, nothing more . . . there was a great sadness about them. Gamay told me about the Fedon family, after she found out that I knew Victor Hugues, that General Fedon, himself, had arranged this escape—the papers, the letters of credit, the money in cash for those who, in those final days, he pushed through a hole in the Anglo net. He could have come himself, but he chose not to.

Gamay said that she had worked, first of all, for the General's father . . . I would say that when I met her, she was a woman of sixty, but still strong and active . . . Pere Fedon was a Gasconne, named Georges. This Papa Fedon shocked his colony friends by marrying Lara, a Housa-Fulani woman who had both beauty and brains. Lara presented him with three sons, Julien, Jacques and Roger. Julien, the eldest, loved his mama, but he was wild and reckless. His papa gave up trying to control him, but that Madame Lara had a will, and she could bring him to heel. Gamay said that Julien and his mama were alike, they were both as stubborn as plantation mules. Jacques and Roger were the quiet ones, she said, and their papa liked them, they were obedient, they recited their catechism and did what parents and priest told them to do. While they did their lessons, Julien would roam the hills like a Carib-hunting, fishing, leading the other boys into all kinds of hazardous adventures. When Julien was twelve, to win a bet, he dived into the sea from a high rock, an Anglo boy named Thornton, said he couldn't allow a mulatto do what he couldn't do, and took up the challenge; but Julien had timed the waves and the rise and fall of the sea swell perfectly; the Thornton boy hadn't and he was broken to pieces on the rocks. After the tragedy, Madame Lara brought Father Marquez, an old Jesuit priest from Martinique, to tutor her sons. The old priest made Julien interested in books. He would sit up late at nights reading until his mama would come and order him to bed.

Once, when Julien was out hunting, and he had sat down under a tree to read, a maroon overpowered him, and took away his gun. When the maroon raised his cutlass to split his skull open, he looked into his assailant's eyes without showing any fear. The maroon changed his mind. Still pinning him down, he told him that if he promised to keep his mouth shut about what had happened for two days, he'd set him free. Julien promised, and kept his word. When the militia went after the maroon three days later with dogs and slave trackers, he had vanished. His name was Seka. He was a Wolof. Later, he fought in Julien's army as a Captain of the maroon units.

For a season, Julien wanted to become a Jesuit priest. Old Father Marquez talked him out of it. The vows would stick in his (Julien's) throat, and he'd have to spit them out and disobey them, the priest told him. Both Monsieur Fedon and Madame Lara died the same year, and Jacques and Georges went away to study. Julien married

Mademoiselle Netta, the year his parents died. She was visiting from Guadeloupe. Madame Netta was pale yellow and brown in color. The tarbrush had touched her hair and complexion like a breath of Spring, and she had the high cheekbones of the Caribs. She was like a young tamerind, she could be bent but never broken. When her two daughters were born, Madame Netta agreed that Gamay should bring them up with her own children. She was ill for a long time after her second daughter was born. Their father made them grow up like the sons he never had. They roamed the woods, learnt every trail, hunted, swam in the river and the sea. Together with her daughters, Madame Netta taught Gamay to read and write, and to count. She studied hard, they gave her time off to do this, and that changed her life. Madame Netta (her name was Antoinette. Monsieur Julien, said, Netta was more Grenadian) and Monsieur Julien paid for Gamay's manumission papers. He gave her money to start trading in the markets, and she became his eyes and ears. Jacques came back home. He had become a Jacobin. He and Charles Nogues and Jean de Vallette, his former schoolmates, had met Victor Hugues, the agent of the new French Republican government. Victor Hugues was an impressive man who, believing in a great cause, and living with danger so long, had something magnetic about his controlled and calm personality. They went back and forth to Martinique and Guadeloupe. They were all putting their heads together at that time planning for the day. Julien, (that's what everyone called him, even after he became a General), Julien went secretly to the main maroon camp in St. Andrew's when their leaders were wavering, and they said that he danced all night. They trusted him after that and took a blood-oath to join him. Jacques went to see Hugues again. Julien said they would not just bring the slave society down, they would build a new one with liberty for everyone. Netta died fighting. Julien arranged for his daughters' escape and ordered Gamay to go with them. They never captured Julien Fedon.

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The papers of Louis Point du Sable included ship's logs, business letters and various jottings, and this record of conversations with Gamay. After she reached Haiti, there is no record of her or of the young women who accompanied her. It is likely that two of those ladies

were Fedon's daughters. Jacques was killed fighting for the revolution. Roger, it is said, settled in Trinidad. And Julien vanished. Immediately after the revolution, therefore, the only known surviving Fedons were two daughters and a brother. There are an infinite number of West Indians who claim to be descendants of Toussaint L'Overture. That is not the case with Julien Fedon. Perhaps, all who are willing to fight for the liberation of mankind are his relatives.

The colonial-slave authorities have expunged from their records the names of Jacques Fedon, and Roger Fedon, Julien's brothers; Antoinette Fedon, Julien's Guadeloupean-born wife; Lena Fedon and Claudette Fedon, the daughters of Julien and Antoinette; and even Julien's father and mother Maurice Fedon and Lara Fedon.

What is extraordinary about these omissions is that somewhere in both British and French archives are other secrets waiting to be uncovered. The late Prime Minister Maurice Bishop had told a group of visiting scholars in 1982, a year before he died, that after his visit to France, the French Government had offered to open their archival material on Grenada for scholars to look at. There is more historical material on Grenada in France and Britain than there is in Grenada itself. Such are the ways of colonialism and its bedfellow, cultural imperialism. A people who find out too many truths about themselves and their past struggles against colonialism and slavery might confront neo-colonial rulers and their imperialist sponsors with a new resolution and courage. Many more of these leaders could then find themselves going to sleep in power, and waking up in exile. It is important to examine with some care, the techniques by which individuals or whole races and nations of people are banished to a limbo world where, shorn of a true history of themselves written by their own historians, and denied a distinctive cultural identity and heroic ancestors, they are not accorded full membership in the human race. The Fedon family has been subjected to banishment into a limbo of silence by colonial historians. Julien Fedon is held up to us as an example of a not too bright mulatto, a misguided negro suffering from the delusion that he could win freedom for his enslaved people, and a cold-blooded killer. According to the official accounts of his life and death, his status is analogous to that of a solitary and mutilated buoy on the Goodwin Sands which warns all who approach to stay clear. One must, therefore, bring him back onto the pages of history with his family and friends around him, since as John Donne had

written "no man is an island unto himself . . ." In the eyes of the colonial slave authorities who have poured so much contumely upon his head, Julien Fedon had had the malice to commit two unpardonable "crimes": he was a man of color, and to add insult to injury, he had betrayed his class. In addition, Fedon had forged a rainbow coalition of white planters, French creole landowners, Free Blacks and Free Mulattoes, slaves, renegades, Catholics, Protestants and Shangoists, Jacobins, anti-Monarchists and Republicans; a group so varied had never come together to fight for liberty, equality, fraternity since the Columbian era began. By the end of the 18th century, the French Imperial eagle had sunk talons into an Empire stretching from the Caribbean to Louisiana, and up the great Mississippi valley, the Great Lakes, and into Canada; while across the Atlantic, the other foot of this eagle was burying its talons into the throat of Senegal and long, curving stretches of the West African Coast, so that the slaves could pour more easily through that obscenely profitable transit port of horror, their slave mart on the island of Goree. So when the French Revolution of 1786 began to shake France and all of Europe to their unstable Imperial foundations, it was inevitable that repercussions would be felt all over the French colonial Empire, and particularly in prized sugar-producing Caribbean colonies. By the time the Bastille had been stormed and taken by the people of Paris, a Black man from the Caribbean was admitted to the Jacobin-Girondist dominated Convention amidst thunderous acclaim.

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There was hardly a slave in the French West Indies who had not heard about those and other stirring events. The very fact that slave owners were going to such great trouble to suppress the news, to dismiss house servants from rooms, and to huddle together to talk in whispers, made the slaves conclude that what was going on in France was hurting their masters and therefore likely to benefit them. So they watched and waited and planned and kept their ears to the ground. And soon, whenever the name Fedon was mentioned, their faces suddenly looked as if they were all wearing ebony masks. The planters knew that something was afoot, but they could not put their finger on the pulse of the impending revolt. While Scottish Presbyterian and other Protestant planters were preoccupied with their bitter debate

over the question of trans-substantiation with Catholics, the majority of their slaves were being involved in a conspiracy right under their conservative noses. Those right wing planters harboured vague suspicions that Julien Fedon was not one of them. They pointed out that his large plantation was being run without whipping posts or whipping holes for pregnant slaves; that the women in his household were able, self-assured, intelligent and strong-willed; and that he not only tolerated their acting like men, but seemed to encourage it. The women in the Big houses—wives, daughters, spinster aunts and sisters, widows—looked on enviously from their gilded cages. They heard stories about those Fedon women who rode astride their horses, hunted on foot in the woods like Blacks or Indians and worked side-by-side with slaves putting up fences and helping out in the sugar mill during the grinding season. And in the midst of their vicious gossip about the “slave blood” in those “unfortunate” women’s veins, they secretly admired them, and envied them their freedom. Fedon’s genius as a leader enabled him to recruit into the ranks of his revolutionary army, fighters from every class, every social stratum of the population, every oppressed and marginal group in the Grenadian colonial-slave society; they all held up their section of the rainbow arch, but women held up one half of it.

Gamay was an indispensable link in Fedon’s revolutionary chain of command. Born in Benin, and brought to Martinique when she was eight, she was separated from her parents and brought to Grenada two years later. As a child she was scrawny and had knees and elbows like knots on an old tree, but she grew up on the Fedon estate to be a powerfully-built woman, strong, quick and cunning. When Julien took over Belvedere, Gamay came into her own. She became literate, and along with Fedon’s wife and daughters, was one of the central figures planning the 1795 revolt. Gamay was a vital link with the slaves and the Free Blacks. They trusted her absolutely. From the markets, she controlled a network of agents in every major estate, in the fields, in the big houses, in the maroon hideouts and even inside the Governor’s mansion. Her agents were so close to the Bekes (the whites), she claimed that everytime one of them sneezed, an agent caught a cold.

Another secret, but important link in Fedon’s revolutionary net-

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work, was the African priests and priestesses, and the most important and widely respected of these lived in maroon communities. Through intermediaries, Fedon made contacts with them soon after he and his inner circle of revolutionary conspirators had begun to meet and to plan. It is inconceivable that he could have done otherwise. If the British figures of slave casualties for the 14 month-long revolt are correct—8,000 killed (they give no figures for the wounded for it was their practice to kill all slave prisoners)—then, as was mentioned earlier, a significantly high percentage of a total adult slave population of 26,000 took part in the fighting. Practically the whole slave population answered Fedon's call, and what is more, they kept fighting to the very end. Their slogan was "Liberty, Fraternity or Death!" And they did not flinch when called upon to align their actions with the words emblazoned on their revolutionary banners. One of the major problems General Fedon had to face, and this contributed to his defeat, was that he had a surfeit of fighters, and not enough arms and supplies to distribute among them. This was a social and psychological advantage, but militarily, it was a serious impediment. If the Jacobins and Girondists had not fallen from power and Robespierre, and his comrades, not executed (for Hugues, Fedon's chief Jacobin ally was among them), the British would not have been able to drown the Grenadian revolt in blood. Toussaint L'Ouverture had managed to overcome this problem at a crucial juncture of the Haitian Revolution by purchasing 75,000 guns from United States arms merchants, and distributing them to the class that he trusted most—the class of peasant cultivators and wage earners on estates.

When the shipment of weapons had arrived, Toussaint had held a mass meeting, and holding a rifle high above his head he had told those former slaves who had been forged into an invincible army, "This is your freedom!" Those were prophetic words, for when Napoleon had tried to re-enslave the Afro-Haitians, they had torn his armies to pieces, and sent General Le Clerc, the Emperor's son-in-law back to France at the head of broken and defeated remnants of a force that originally, when it landed in Haiti, has been second in size only to the Grande Armee Napoleon had led to Moscow. Le Clerc, poor fellow, died of shame, shortly after returning home.

The Voodoun priests, Boukman and Macandal, had come down from their mountain hideouts on the eve of the Haitian Revolution, and trumpeted their famous incantation to liberty, calling on the

slaves to symbolically reject the god of the colonizers and to embrace their god liberation. This incantation proved to be an irresistible one—the whole slave population of Haiti rose up to respond to it. The Grenadian Voudoun and Shango priests, too, sounded their incantation, and sent it like a hurricane wind across the island. It was as though they were fulfilling the prophecy in Kaierouanne's final battle-cry, "Kaori homan! We will rise again!"

The African religions were the religions of the majority. Although many of the Free Blacks, Free Mulattoes and slaves of French masters had been converted to Christianity, they were still secret believers in Shango and Voudoun, and just in case Jesus Christ and the Saints were not as responsive to their prayers as they would have them be, they appealed, depending on the region in Africa they came from, to Legba, Master of the Crossroads, to Nyankapon, the Sky God and to many other deities with perfect equanimity. They could dance to Shango drums all night, and then attend mass in the Catholic Church at dawn. Since the French Revolution had spawned a new breed of activist priests, Fedon had the added advantage of Catholic priests who were Jacobin supporters, winning new converts to revolution for him. Ninian Home, a pillar of the plantocracy and a protestant bigot, had written to a friend complaining about the disturbing effects these priests were having on the slaves. Home, as Lieutenant Governor, had sent a detachment of the militia into the mountains of St. Andrew's, to hunt down and kill maroons. The detachment was made up of 30 armed slaves and 6 white militiamen. They were ordered to carry food for three days and to search every nook and cranny in those mountains. At the time, the daily wage of a militiaman was the equivalent of one dollar however, volunteers for this dangerous mission were paid three times more, plus an award of six pounds (thirty dollars) for every runaway or maroon captured.

In 1794, Ninian Home claimed that he had, arrested many suspicious looking Frenchmen whom he had reason to believe had come to Grenada to foment disturbances against the government and to invite an insurrection of the slaves. All militiamen were placed on full alert in every parish, as well as the Harbour-Master and Customs Officers in Grenville and St. George's . . . Alexander

Nevett, a French visitor, was imprisoned on entering Grenada and . . . deported on suspicion of having come to foment trouble. Sailors who were suspected of being in league with French emissaries were arrested and imprisoned. In January, 1794, a 14-day embargo was placed on all ships in St. George's harbour, and more blacks were employed in the militia. This was done as a precaution against the suspected slave insurrection.<sup>2</sup>

Despite the assurance of one colonial historian, that after some concern about "a general slave insurrection that was thought to be imminent . . ."<sup>3</sup> but by 1771, perfect "tranquility returned to Grenville."<sup>4</sup> There never was "perfect tranquility" during any colonial-slave period in Grenada or anywhere else. In 1765, two years after the British had taken over from the French, Governor Melville, a General, who understood the seriousness of the threat that armed and intrepid maroons could pose to a slave society, began his tenure in office by offering the maroons amnesty. They wisely refused. Colonizers never felt bound by any agreements they made with insurgents from the ranks of the colonized. In April, 1765, Melville then ordered "the capture, trial and punishment of all who persisted to be obstinate offenders."<sup>5</sup> By August, he was expressing fears "that there would be a general maroon uprising."<sup>6</sup> He requested bayonets, muskets and boxes of cannon balls for the militia. In 1779, the year the French seized Grenada once more, "great alarm was caused in St. Andrew's by maroon depredations."<sup>7</sup> St. Andrew's, with its heavily wooded mountains providing a haven for runaways, was quite obviously a bone in the throat of the colonizer. In 1770, too, the leader of a group of maroons in St. Andrew's was hunted down and killed by the militia. His name was Abiosha. His followers abandoned their base and retired to more inaccessible haunts in the mountains.

In 1795, the year of the Fedon revolt, the Grenadian colonial forces consisted of a permanent complement of 293 officers and men garrisoned in the forts, a militia of 900, 500 of whom were British, 80, French and 300, Free Coloureds. In addition, the cavalry numbered 40 to 50.<sup>8</sup> Initially, these were the forces aligned against Fedon's revolutionary army.

This large and expensive military establishment was, by 1795, prop-

ping up a slave society whose social and economic fabric was being torn to shreds. It was a society suffering from a disease that only a revolution could cure. Grenada, a slave-colonial society which had been hiding the decline of its economic virility with fig leaves since the beginning of the 1760s, was suddenly left naked by the American War of Independence in 1776. Eric Williams, in his *Columbus to Castro*, stated that the loss of those American colonies, "caused the West Indies to starve in the short run and to be ruined in the long run."<sup>9</sup> In 1776 freight rates went up by 25%; and by 1781, they had doubled. According to Lowell Ragatz, "The decade 1783-93 brought no relief to the planters; large numbers fell beneath the weight of accumulated distress."<sup>10</sup> Later, as though the planters and their families were content to be pampered to death, "domestics numbered 13% of the population throughout the British West Indies."<sup>11</sup> William's comment on this was that "combined with a system of large estate owners the B.W.I. had become a system of household management rather than a commercial plantation."<sup>12</sup> As the economic erosion continued in the Caribbean, businesses in England began to fail, "between 1793 and 1829, some 60 . . . financial houses went into liquidation . . ."<sup>13</sup>

But the structure of Grenada's economic system, at the time of the Fedon revolt, was not unlike one of the giant trees in the rain forests of the Amazon Basin. When the lumberjacks have cut completely through the trunk at the base of the tree, it still remains standing for a while, because it is held up by hundreds of lianas, and has other trees to lean on. But it slowly begins to topple when these supports are cut away. As it falls, it swings this way and that, bringing down a host of smaller trees with it, and sometimes killing the axemen as it oscillates.

The French seizure of Grenada (1779-83) also dealt the already faltering Grenadian economy a serious blow. Trade was re-directed from England to France, traditional markets were lost, debts, which the French abrogated, had to be paid later; the number of ships trading with Grenada fell. In most cases, prices rose by 100 percent. The weight of these economic dislocations pressed down more heavily than ever on the backs of the Grenadian slaves.

Fedon was the chief axeman cutting through the base of the Grenadian tree of State, after he and his followers had finished the job, this tree would kill them with one of its wild swings, and then take half a century to fall bringing the slave system down with it.

## CHAPTER TEN

*The hour has struck  
We must arise  
Liberty, Fraternity or Death!*

Julien Fedon 1795

Towards the end of February, Seka, the maroon leader, sent an urgent message to Gamay, while she was visiting the Grenville market, telling her that one of her agents had been trying to get in contact with Ninian Home, the Lieutenant Governor. They had taken the man to their maroon hideout, and questioned him. He had named names. There were six others involved. Using the one they had captured as a decoy, they lured the other six to a rendezvous close to Ninian Home's estate and silenced them forever. To wait any longer would be dangerous.

It was remarkable that the Fedon conspiracy for freedom, involving such a wide and varied assortment of people could have gone on for years, in such a small island without the colonial and slave authorities having any real idea about its all-pervasiveness. One hundred and eighty four years later, another successful conspiracy for freedom would be hatched on this island of Grenada against an equally omnipotent tyranny. Grenadians, living within earshot of one another on their small island are conspirators by instinct. They have had long practice in deceiving tyrants.

Let us examine some of the circumstances and conditions that existed immediately before the Fedon revolt. The French invasion and seizure of Grenada (1779–1783) had disturbed and seriously affected for the worse the British colonial security apparatus by replacing it with that of the new colonial rulers. When the French left after occupying the island for that important four-year period, they destroyed or took most of the records with them. The British then had to reconstruct their system of surveillance and control from scratch. Ninian Home,

that archetypal representative of the planter class, as Lieutenant Governor, had voiced suspicions about slave unrest from time to time, but when the hour struck, he was caught completely by surprise. [He was out hunting ramiers with a party of friends on one of his estates when the first news of a revolt reached him.]

Colonial historians keep insisting that "Fedon, hated the English" as though this Free Mulatto was involved in some kind of personal vendetta. This diminishes his stature as a great leader, and makes petulance, and not a passion for liberty, the motive for his becoming the leader of an epic revolt against slavery and colonialism. Fedon was a Brown Jacobin, a West Indian leader ahead of his time. He was the immediate predecessor of Toussaint L'Ouverture, who would certainly have heard about his (Fedon's) revolt and learnt from his mistakes. Most of Fedon's writings have disappeared, except for fragments which the colonizers have deliberately selected to show him in the worst possible light. However, it is clear that his Jesuitical training had given to him a certain moral integrity, a manicheistic vision of right and wrong, good and evil. In Latin America, it is said that this training can make one either a revolutionary or a fascist. And for colonials, at that time, shut away as they were from the mainstream of metropolitan ideas, when some of those ideas seeped through, as happened in the Caribbean during the French Revolution, they struck like lightning; the new converts seized upon them with a passion that sometimes bordered on obsession.

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The ideas of the Jacobins awakened Fedon, a wealthy Free Mulatto, to the hideous realities around him—he was a scion of plantocrats and slaves, living in a beautiful homeland where Nature was kind and the slave system implacable in its savagery. Once he had awakened to this reality, being the man that he was, it was impossible for him to continue functioning as a plantation owner, living off of the proceeds of slave labor. So having made a profound diagnosis of the ills of Grenadian society as a whole, he came step-by-step to the conclusion that his society was suffering from a malady that only revolution could cure. And with Jacques, Charles and Jean Pierre repeating for his benefit the conversations they had with Victor Hugues, he understood more clearly than ever the visceral link between the French

Revolution and the slave revolt that the majority of his people had called upon him to lead. Hugues had told them about the long periods in the wilderness when Robespierre, living in the baker's quarters under the Cité Université kept publishing his revolutionary pamphlets, and his incendiary journal, giving to the most despised a profound understanding of their strength and their invincibility once they were united, armed with revolutionary ideas, and with guns; in control of the apparatus of state power, and ceaselessly vigilant.

In 1790, when Jacques, Fedon's brother, had first met Hugues, he had told him that the authorities were calling on all the French in Grenada to swear an oath of loyalty to Great Britain. There was a great deal of opposition to this, Jacques said, particularly amongst the comrades in his brother Julien's inner circle.

"Persuade them to take the oath of loyalty," Hugues had advised. "You live in a renegade state where the majority of its citizens are not even classified as human beings. The only oath that can be respected, is the one taken to overthrow it."

So in 1790, thirty-five Frenchmen signed the Declaration of Loyalty, including Jacques Fedon, Julien Fedon, Jean Allard, Pierre Julien Valie, Charles Nogues, Jean St. Bernard, Ignace DuBisset, Louis La Granada and Stanislaus Besson—all part of the inner circle. They were also aware of the fact that by refusing to sign, they would have immediately become suspect, and there was much that they had to conceal from the eyes and ears of the British authorities.

Charles Nogues and Jean Pierre La Vallette had their final meeting with Victor Hugues in Guadeloupe in January, 1795. They had been approached by Hugues at a previous meeting and asked to sound out Fedon about the possibility of his accepting a commission as a General in the French Republican Army. Once the revolt started, Fedon had replied politely that he would give the matter some thought. Fedon rejected Hugues' offer, although he did not object to his close aides, Nogues, being commissioned a Captain and La Vallette, a Lieutenant in the French Republican Army. The two were later to show proof of this to Ninian Home when he was their prisoner. The commissions were dated at Port de la Liberté le 7 ventose, l'an trois de la République Française une et indivisible, and signed in the name of the French Government by Labas, Gayrand and Victor Hugues. Fedon didn't need a French commission, the Grenadian people flocking to his banner had already chosen him as their leader.

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The few British documents about Fedon that exist, attribute sinister motives to his close relationship with Victor Hugues, and the French Republican Government.

What Fedon had, in fact, established through Hugues, was a necessary alliance with a Republican France, that had recently overthrown its monarchy, and through this and other revolutionary actions, set the stage for the abolition of slavery, and a new relationship of equals between colonizer and colonized. Fedon knew that a slave revolt, to be successful needed much more than resounding slogans and heroic gestures. The slaves had to be liberated, armed and forged into an invincible fighting force. Toussaint, whose slave revolt started a mere four years after Fedon's was drowned in the blood of more than half the adult slave population of Grenada, made sure that his would succeed where Fedon's had failed. Fedon's magnificent and brilliantly organized revolt could not have been crushed so brutally by the British if he had received the shipments of arms and supplies that Hugues had promised him. With those arms, he would have created a peoples' militia of about 15,000, and this group plus his regulars could have pinned down twice as many British troops as they had done and defeated them in the end. The colonial records attest to the butchery of innocents that took place during and after the Fedon revolt. Fedon's army, we are told, numbered around three thousand, yet over seven thousand slaves died. How was this possible?

At a crucial stage of the Haitian Revolution, Toussaint, in addition to the arsenal of weapons he already had, was able to purchase 75,000 rifles from the United States, and he used these to arm the people. Hugues had made firm commitments to supply Fedon with arms, and also to protect the supply routes to Grenada with the French naval units. When Hugues returned to France in 1795, he had every intention of keeping the promise he had made to Fedon, and his Grenadian Revolutionary Council, to his comrades in Martinique and Guadeloupe, and to those in Haiti. But he had no sooner set foot in Paris, than he was drawn into the deadly struggle between Robespierre's Jacobin-Girondist coalition and their implacable enemies. Robespierre's faction, of which Hugues was one of the leaders, lost. These leaders were all executed. The guillotine robbed Fedon of his principal ally in France.

Unlike Toussaint, Fedon did not have agents and lobbyists in France. If he did, his lobbyists could have used the tactic of encouraging the new French government to continue supporting him, and, thus, helping to snatch Grenada, a coveted island prize, from the clutches of their British enemies.

Some arms and 200 troop reinforcements did reach Fedon from St. Lucia and Guadeloupe, Hugues had arranged this before leaving France. But, these were pitifully inadequate for dealing with the massive naval and military forces that the British were able to mount against him. Barbados became the main British base of operations, and in addition to Grenadiers, and a variety of other troops, they also brought armed slave units from that island to beef up the local slave detachments and to make sure that they didn't defect to the Fedon camp as many slave and free soldiers had already done.

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Gamay sent a special messenger with the news to Fedon, and advised him that she had alerted all of her agents to stand by. Fedon called a meeting of his inner circle. Gamay had provided them with a reliable and highly trained corps of messengers. They knew every trail, and every byway in the parishes, and they had been trained to outwit dogs and slave trackers. Each messenger was armed with a poignard, (a dagger with a long thin blade that could stab or cut), which was sheathed and strapped to the side of the leg inside loose pantaloons. In a day, these couriers could run thirty miles following the winding paths across hills and plains. All of them carried a make-up kit. In populated areas, the messengers with their hair whitened and ashes rubbed over their bodies, could transform themselves into drooling old beggars with bent backs and plaintive voices. Not one of Gamay's couriers was ever apprehended. In slave societies, the aged were castaways. Having been mercilessly exploited, they were often thrown out of their slave quarters to wander about as beggars and vagrants. Even when there were laws to prevent this being done, the planters tended to ignore them. After the rigors and savageries of slavery, they were rewarded with the freedom to die. That was why couriers, pretending to be old and decrepit, were seldom captured.

Those attending the meeting in answer to Fedon's summons were

Stanislaus Besson, Jean Pierre La Vallette, Charles Nogues, Baptiste Stanislaus, Ignace Du Bisset, Jean Allard, Ettienne Ventour, Joachim Phillippe, and Jean St. Bernard, and, in addition to these Free-Coloured French speaking Grenadians, were Gamay, Seka, the maroon Captain, and Bankole Alban, Gamay's right-hand man, Netta, Fedon, and daughters Lena and Claudette.

Fedon chaired the meeting. He welcomed those present to Belvedere, and came straight to the main issues. They were all in this movement because they were prepared to risk all to liberate Grenada from the Anglos, and to end the Carnival Macabre of masters and slaves forever. The blood of masters and slaves coursed in the veins of many of them, the Free Coloureds, but the blood of Europe was extolled, while that of Africa was denied, trivialized, deprecated. Therefore, to liberate the slave meant for each of them, liberating themselves; but some, he had declared, looking at Netta, and smiling, were even more fortunate, they carried the blood of Africans, Caribs and Europeans in their veins. But they had not gathered there to discuss family trees, he said, and he called on Seka to repeat his story about the traitor who had been intercepted on his way to the Governor's mansion. They listened, and after some discussion, decided that the time for launching the rebellion had arrived. It was an extraordinary gathering which included some of the wealthiest and most highly educated Free Coloured landowners in the Caribbean. But for all their wealth and education, they were still treated with contempt and hemmed in by restrictions; the white planters often regarded them as more of a threat than they did their slaves. Fedon had said repeatedly to those Free Coloureds that in the middle of the path, you get splashed with filth from the slave carts on one side and from carriages of the white planters on the other, so you had to choose sides. La Grenada, a schoolmate of Fedon's, had chosen the other side, and the more principled Free Coloureds always held him up as an example to their children of someone whom they should not emulate. As for the others, they were certain, in the same way that Fedon was, that when the slaves were free, everyone would be free.

Du Bisset raised the question of the safety of their wives and children, "Shouldn't they be sent away to Martinique, St. Lucia, or Guadeloupe?" he had asked. Fedon had replied that the slaves had nowhere to send their wives and children. They were all fighting, to take over a country that was rightfully theirs . . . and Netta chimed in and

added that certainly, the young children, those of the cultivators and their own, should be protected, but wives, and the youth who were of age should be invited to join the ranks of the fighters.

Fedon's original plan had been to wait until Hugues returned to France before starting the revolt. He and his followers would then have seized the island and begun reorganizing the society to repulse the counter-attacks that the British were certain to mount. For this, they would have needed heavy and light cannon (particularly nine pounders, which were easy to transport, and could be deadly from heights above steep slopes), thirty thousand rifles, double that number of pistols, bayonets, cutlasses, swords, ammunition and gunpowder. They would supplement those with what they captured from the enemy.

That meeting was held on February 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1795, and those who were present voted unanimously to launch an insurrection exactly one month later. As a dramatic demonstration to all Grenadians that a mighty blow for freedom had been struck, they would select a town which symbolized all that was hateful in the slave system, raze it, and parade the captured planters and their defeated Parish Militia through the streets. Once this was done, while troops were being rushed to the area, towns, settlements and estates would be hit all over the island. The British troops and militia would then have to be broken up into small units which, time and again, could be ambushed and destroyed. The cultivators, (the word slave, would be dropped from the Grenadian lexicon), would be organized into regular army units, a militia and small mobile units of cavalry and irregulars on foot. The British troops should be constantly harassed and kept off balance. In this way their morale would be eroded. As far as the blacks that the British armed were concerned, Gamay would speak on that issue.

Gamay used creole innuendo and wit to make her point. She declared that those wretches with black skins and white hearts were very strong-minded; they could stand whips and manacles and stocks and centuries of sweating in fields and factories without wages, and still fawn upon those who were inflicting those atrocities on them and their families. Families? that was not the right word, litters, would be closer: litters of house pets, like puppies, that would be sold or given away or drowned, and trained to grow up as guard dogs, house dogs, work dogs, stray dogs . . . yes, they had strong minds. The cultivators

who joined her side, the side of liberty, equality or death, Gamay said, didn't have strong enough minds to put up with all of that bestial treatment, and still fight to defend it. But, she and her agents would approach the wives, the mothers, the grandmothers, the daughters, the sisters and aunts of those vile creatures, and appeal to those women. She concluded they were confused, but others would die slaves.

Fedon called on those present to suggest a town, one that was dominated by Anglos, and one that symbolized all that was cruel and inhuman in the slave system. They chose Marquis. It was almost half-way up the eastern coast, and close enough to Belvedere where he could assemble his troops with utmost secrecy. The planters in and around Marquis often boasted that they got more work out of their slaves than any of their peers. They were skilled in the art of breaking the spirits of recalcitrants, their overseers could draw a contour map of Grenada with their whips on the back of a slave. "After all," they would declare over their hot toddies, "those creatures are like children, they need strong masters in their school of hard labor." Those planters were forever contradicting themselves, they would declare that this or that person "worked like a black" and in the next breath say that blacks were endemically lazy; or that they, the blacks, were like children. But children were a part of the human race, and they swore that blacks were not human.

Those despised cultivators in Marquis would soon teach them a lesson. They would spare those who were kind, and punish the cruel ones, and they would do it judiciously; then they would raze the property that their forced labor had built. March 2nd, 1795 was the date agreed on, and before that meeting ended two other decisions were taken:

1) that Julien Fedon, would be Leader and Commander-in-Chief of all forces in Grenada; that Stanislaus Besson should be the overall Field Commander; that the other senior officers should be Captain Charles Nogues, Captain Baptiste Stanislaus, Ignace Du Bisset, Jean W. Allard, Ettienne Ventour, Joachim Phillip, Jean St. Bernard, Lieutenant Jean Pierre La Vallette, and in addition Captain Seka, Bankole Alban and Gamay would head the irregular forces, and

2) that Captain Nogues, and Lieutenant La Vallette, should leave as soon as possible for Guadeloupe, where they would meet with Victor Hugues, bring him up-to-date on their plans, and stress once

again the importance of ensuring that the approaches to Grenada be kept open by the French Navy and that arms, ammunition and supplies should reach them in time.

Nogues and La Vallette returned from Guadeloupe on February 20th. They were in high spirits, but the news they brought was not all good. Victor Hugues had returned to France hurriedly a few months earlier, and had been arrested as soon as he arrived in Paris.

Robespierre, his political mentor, had been executed.

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The Commune had ordered Robespierre's arrest and many of his Jacobin followers had been guillotined with him on the 27th and 28th of July, 1794. In the aftermath of his execution, the Convention had supplanted the Commune. One of the first acts of this newly constituted Convention, was to abolish the first Republican Constitution of 1793. It then vested executive power in the hands of the Council of Ancients; and the Council of Five Hundred. The duty of the latter was to propose new laws, and of the former, to pass upon them and to accept or reject them. It seemed as though they were bent on establishing a system of divide so that no one might rule, and this equilibrium of legislative impotence was to lead to a number of retrogressive steps. The French bourgeoisie, had in the first place, wanted a tidy revolution, one in which the ruling aristocracy, which had clearly outlived its usefulness, would have been quickly swept aside to make room for them. They, the bourgeoisie, would then set about reshuffling the class system so that their ascendancy could be ensured. They would take over the apparatus of State power, and with it, the means of production, distribution, and exchange, and manipulate it more rationally for their benefit primarily, and as a secondary consideration, for the benefit of the nation as a whole. The Jacobins, under Robespierre, had come very close (too close for their peace of mind) to thwarting these plans by bringing onto center stage in this drama of revolution, the workers and peasants and their allies in a bid to give all power to the people.

\* \* \*

In the midst of hearing this news from France, the question uppermost in Fedon's mind was whether those new groups making their ruthless moves on the checkerboard of metropolitan politics, would be for or against the abolition of slavery. For the slaves in revolt in Grenada were the Jacobins of the Caribbean. And having asked himself the question, he could not, as a realist, take comfort from the way in which the question, having been posed, provided its own answer. Another disturbing item of news that his two emissaries brought back, was that the emigrés, had started returning to France in large numbers, and that some of them, who had fled to what they considered to be safe colonial enclaves with their slaves (Trinidad was their first choice as a sanctuary), were returning to the French Antilles. This did not bode well for the future. Those implacable enemies of the revolution would be even more implacable against slaves fighting to abolish their slavery. But Nogues and La Vallette, who had returned in high spirits, had brought back arms and ammunition, caps of liberty, cockades and a flag of liberation with the words "Liberty, Equality or Death!" inscribed on it in bold letters.

Fedon sent a message to the members of his inner circle telling them to assemble at Belvedere on the afternoon of March 1<sup>st</sup>.

It had rained on the morning of March 1<sup>st</sup>, 1795, but the slaves working in the sugarcane fields did not have to take shelter because the sun burst out in the midst of the showers. For a while, the sun and rain fought to gain the upper hand. The sun won the contest. The slaves, as they were wont to do on those occasions, joked amongst themselves that the devil and his wife had been fighting over a ham bone, and the devil had won. Sun was the devil, and rain was his wife. The former was cruel, the latter, benevolent. For the slave in the Caribbean, the sun became the cruellest of all elemental and cosmic symbols. The saying that only "mad dogs and Englishmen go out in the mid-day sun" is pure fiction. English planters and colonial officials never ventured out at noon without a slave holding an umbrella over their heads. Over-dressed and indolent, they spent much time drinking and idling in the shade. Those colonial planters invented the myth that the tropical climate was "unhealthy", when, in fact, their life-style was itself unhealthy.

It was the slave who went out in the mid-day sun as part of a twelve-hour working day.

*Sun is a burning fire turning on air . . .*

-Guyanese poet A. J. Seymour.

*White sun raping dark rivers,  
White sun biting like a Llanero's whip,  
White sun embering in ashes  
of its own fire.*

-Anonymous

The sun went down on March 1<sup>st</sup>, and carried with it the end of a chapter in Grenadian history, as it “embered in ashes of its own fire”. One of Seka’s maroon units, a group of cultivators that Bankole Alban had hand-picked, and cultivators from Belvedere and from Besson’s estate encamped at the foot of Mount Qua-Qua when darkness fell. Fedon mixed easily with the men and women gathered there. For most of them, he was already a legendary figure, but they had never seen him in the flesh or heard him before. He was lean, but well-muscled and his slow deep voice was one that once you heard it, you never forgot its particular resonances. It was a creole voice that could caress, plead, command or persuade with equal facility. They were awkward with him at first, but he made them laugh and put them at their ease, switching from English to French creole as he spoke. His own infectious laughter, one of his closest friends had said, always came as a surprise, because he looked so grave and serious most of the time. Netta and her daughters joined him as he was circulating amongst the groups squatting or lounging under the trees. They teased him, and scolded him. He took it all in good spirit. After the men had eaten, and were cleaning and inspecting their weapons, he told them once again that together, they had to take Marquis completely by surprise. All weapons and ammunition should then be seized and collected, and afterwards they would write a declaration of liberty with fire across the Grenadian skies. They moved out of their camp just after midnight. They were, without knowing it, adopting a Carib tradition of attack-striking in the early hours of the morning when sleep is an ally of the attacker. Seka’s maroons were in the lead, they had learnt, he said, to “marry the darkness” and that was no idle claim because the Stygian gloom of Grenadian nights provided an ex-

cellent backdrop with which their dark skins could blend. They could literally disappear before one's eyes in an instant. And those ferocious Spanish hunting dogs, which slave-catchers used to terrorize runaways, presented no problem for these St. Andrew's Maroons, they had learnt to set traps for them and for their handlers; to fight them with their bare hands or to impale them with bamboo spears. After a while, the militia had lost so many of those expensive dogs, that they stopped using them.

They had marked the houses where the Parish Militiamen and soldiers slept. Bankole's men even marked the houses where their mistresses lived. At 3:30 a.m., when roosters of dawn were already crowing in a desultory fashion, Fedon gave the order to attack.

By the time a reluctant sun was peering out of the sea, every militiaman and soldier had been captured or killed and all of the townspeople ordered out of their houses. They had not had time to get dressed, and stood half-naked and stunned where they had been directed by Fedon's black insurgents to stand. The former slaves were able to see those plantocrats, lawyers, businessmen and their wives and families, and their mistresses, who only a day before had had the power of life and death over them looking frightened and pathetic and vulnerable; thinking that the end of the world must surely have come. Some of them tried to appeal to Fedon, Besson and La Vallette, treating them with a respect that they had never seen fit to accord to Free Coloureds before, but the three ignored them. After the guns and ammunition were seized, the town was burnt to the ground. The men, all of them prominent slave-owning citizens, herded together and marched off as prisoners. The women, who had expected to be raped and violated, were left alone. These former slaves gave to the worthy citizens of Marquis a lesson in revolutionary discipline.

"On their way to Belvedere," Brizan wrote, "they awoke and seized other leading British estate-owners in the area. When they arrived at Palthazar, Father Peissonier, a French priest, rushed out and brought a sheet to cover a Mr. Ross, who was almost naked. The priest was accused of being an aristocrat and was shot on the spot . . ."<sup>1</sup>

Now, this Father Peissonier was an aristocrat and had been a slave owner for some time. But the nakedness of this own slaves had never bothered him. For years, his eyes had beheld the nakedness of other

slaves all over the island with equanimity. But, Ross he felt, was after all, an important parishioner, and only his wife and his servants had a right to see him in that state of deshabillé. And then, of course, there were also other secret witnesses of his nakedness, those unfortunate slave women, wives, mothers, and daughters, who had so often been forced to respond to his lascivious importunings, since that was considered by the priest and his friends as his *droit de seigneur*.

Those early and carefully made plans of Fedon had worked perfectly. He was a brilliant and meticulous organizer who left nothing to chance. He also knew his people, and had an inner ear for their concerns, and Gamay, Seka and Bankole briefed him regularly on what was going on in the countryside. When his revolutionary forces had taken Marquis, his men had let out a great freedom-shout, as though they wanted it to be heard in every corner of Grenada. Fedon understood that one of his weaknesses, and it was one that he knew he had to remedy very quickly, was that his Revolutionary Council, apart from Gamay, Seka and Bankole, was a predominantly middle-class one. He was fully aware that he could not win the war against the British for the control of Grenada and transform a slave society into a free one without new leaders being selected from the ranks of the people. So, he kept his eyes open for those with courage, ability and intelligence, and as the revolt progressed, he was amazed at how many talented individuals were to emerge from the ranks of the liberated slaves.

Fedon, who thought of everything, had promised the citizens of Marquis that later in the day, food and clothing would be issued to them. He also told them that all slaves would henceforth be their own masters and mistresses, and were entitled to wages for any work done. It was a revolt, he explained, to end British colonial rule, to abolish slavery and to create a just, republican society. He invited those who were so inclined, to join his republican forces, assuring them that he was not alone in this struggle because Republican France was walking side by side with him.

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Before the night stars had faded from the skies twice, Fedon's insurgents had captured Grenville, and the redoubtable Lieutenant Ventour had led the attack on Gouyave and seized it. Grenville was Grenada's second seaport, and its capture meant that the volume of supplies that Fedon needed to defeat the British forces and to take over the island could reach him in two or three days from Martinique, Guadeloupe or St. Lucia. Controlling Grenville, Gouyave and Grand Etang meant that one could converge on St. George's from several directions, and with relatively small mobile detachments, keep large concentrations of forces pinned down there. The two ports and the central Grand Etang heights were like a giant crossbow threatening the back and flanks of St. George's with its arrows.

Fedon, at the beginning, had all the advantages save one: he did not have naval support. This meant that the British could land anywhere they chose on the many beaches and coves that ringed Grenada and they began to do this almost as soon as news reached the authorities in St. George's about the extent of the revolt.

Before the first week of the revolt had gone by, Fedon's insurgents were in control of several important strategic centers, and had captured the Lieutenant Governor, and a group of the island's leading citizens. The prisoners were being held in the Mount Fedon fortress (Mount Qua-Qua had been renamed Mount Fedon). Ninian Home, the Lieutenant Governor, despite his occasional grumblings about slave unrest, (he himself owned over a thousand slaves) was caught completely by surprise. With him was Alexander Campbell and a group of other close friends. When the news of the insurrection reached them, they tried to reach St. George's by sailing along the western coast of the island. On their way south, however a vessel which they mistook for a French pirate ship, appeared on the horizon, and they put into Gouyave's harbour hastily. As soon as they landed, they were captured by Fedon's insurgents. Home was a man noted for his strong aversion to blacks, French Catholics and Free Coloureds, even though he kept a mulatto mistress. He had once barred Julien Fedon and his brother Jacques, from attending a party at Government House, and much to the amusement of his planter friends, had poured ridicule upon their heads as they left. He had never at the time dreamt that one day he would be the prisoner of Julien and Jacques. But Fedon had more important things to do than to

carry out petty acts of revenge against an Anglo bigot. He treated him correctly, addressed him as "Governor" and accorded to him all the rights of a prisoner-of-war. The others who were captured, fifty-one in all, included a local physician John Hay, Reverend Francis McMahon the Anglican Rector, and John Kerr.

On March 4, with more and more of the island falling into insurgent hands and with the slaves' declaration of independence written in fire everywhere across the night skies, Fedon sent an ultimatum by Charles Nogues and Joachim Phillippe under a flag of truce to demand of McKenzie, President of the Council:

That the representatives of His Majesty's Government in St. George's surrender Grenada to those whose sweat and blood wrung out of them by slavery and plunder, had created its wealth, and to the leaders they had chosen to deliver them, or face the scourges of war and utter destruction.<sup>2</sup>

This ultimatum was signed by General Julien Fedon, in the name of the Republican Government of France.

The Jacobin spirit was alive in the Caribbean. Victor Hugues had returned to France to die, but he had left a trail of revolutionary ideas that were strewn like burning embers behind him. These embers would blaze up and be extinguished in Grenada, in Martinique, but the blaze would become a conflagration in Haiti, where Toussaint would lead the first successful slave rebellion in recorded history.

McKenzie, a crony of Home's who had taken over as President of the Council, sent an arrogant reply, the tone of which reminded one of a headmaster responding to a wayward pupil; he called the leaders of the revolt by their last names:

If, Fedon and the other misguided leaders of this insurrection, should be so blinded as to their loyalty and duty and in any degree injure those whom chance has unfortunately thrown into their hands or destroy any property upon the island, they will only have themselves to blame

for that severity and rigour which most assuredly will be the consequence of any such proceeding.<sup>3</sup>

McKenzie, President of the Council, in his ill-advised reply, had placed his close friends, and property, on an equal footing, and in the end, the latter would become more important than the former. At the time of drafting that reply, the President of the Council was still certain that the rebellion could be snuffed out with the forces he had at his disposal. While slaves were putting fields and estate buildings to the torch night after night, McKenzie was wagging a cautionary school master's finger at Fedon, and reminding him of his duty to protect property.

On the 5th of March, Captain Guerdon and 40 regulars of the 58th Regiment, together with another 90 volunteers from Colonel Garraway's regiment left for Gouyave. This force was obviously assembled somewhat hastily, and its commanding officer, Colonel Park, had no idea of the calibre of fighters he was about to face, the high quality of their leadership, their invincible morale and the almost universal support they enjoyed everywhere in Grenada. He was, like so many of his ilk, blinded by his own prejudices. It was only after a succession of defeats that they began to take cognizance of those facts, and to devise more effective strategies. But halfway through the revolt, when the arrogant McKenzie was shattered by defeat and sunk in despair, he began, in his tormented fantasies to attribute to Fedon superhuman qualities. The pendulum of racism always swings from one extreme to the other in these situations of crisis.

When those forty regulars from the 58th and the 90 "brave" volunteers arrived outside Gouyave, Fedon's spies who were everywhere in the countryside, thanks to Gamay, had advised him about their every move, so he and his forces quietly evacuated the town. The enemy occupied and an apparently undefended Gouyave triumphantly, and decided to rest there for the night. Fedon, striking at the best of those troops—Guerdon's regulars—attacked at 4 a.m. in the dark of the morning.

Four hundred insurgents, with Seka's maroons in the lead, launched the attack. They crept up on the sentries and killed them swiftly and silently, and stormed the camp where the others were asleep. In the chaos that ensued, several of those regulars were killed by their own comrades-in-arms, while others were cut down by black

insurgents who used cutlasses and poignards at close quarters with deadly effect.

Guerdon's claims about the casualties his forces sustained are, because of the nature of the attack, highly questionable. He reported that twelve of the attackers were killed and twenty wounded, while four of his men were wounded.<sup>4</sup> But in the next breath, he stated that from the information he had received concerning the insurgents, he had decided to put off any further attack until reinforcements arrived from St. George's. If, as Guerdon claimed, the insurgents had only succeeded in wounding four regulars, then certainly, even though he was far from being a good officer, he would have gone in hot pursuit of his inept enemies. His casualties, therefore, were much greater and he lied about them. When those reinforcements did arrive by land and sea, Fedon lured the combined force to his camp at Mount Qua-Qua. In their bid to capture that high mountain retreat, the insurgent leader inflicted a crushing defeat on them. Guerdon left us with no figures of the casualties his forces sustained on this occasion, but he did complain that "Fedon had occupied an impregnable position on a fortified hill with six pounders arranged at strategic points so that they could effectively smash any attempt at an incursion. In addition, there were two armed posts, one above the other on the highest hill in that area."<sup>5</sup>

In these two armed encounters, an army of former slaves, led by a despised Free Colored planter, who had had no previous military training or experience, had out-generalled and defeated the best British troops in Grenada. The psychological effects of these defeats became almost immediately apparent.

Discouraged by the general hopelessness of their position discontent soon spread among Guerdon's men, resulting in many fights. In one case a Private Mungo McArthur, tried to kill Captain Park with a bayonet. The men complained that they were volunteers, that they had left their property undefended in St. George's and that they were unwilling to continue with this fruitless bush-fighting.<sup>6</sup>

The consternation evolved into chaos, and the chaos into panic; the chronicle of woe continued:

A certain Teepman, had rumoured that Fedon's men were within five miles of St. Georges's . . . At one point, an officer, Captain Snagg, was encouraging the men to quit Gouyave and return to their families . . . Dr. Beatly, who was sent along as the army's surgeon had abandoned his post since the afternoon of the 5th and there was no one to care for the sick, wounded and dying men.<sup>7</sup>

Those planter volunteers and soldiers had obviously come expecting to take part in a military carnival in which superior beings were going to teach a lesson to Free Coloured upstarts and slaves. But things had turned out differently. Fedon, apart from his other gifts as a leader, had a profound understanding of the planter psychology. He and his boyhood friends and acquaintances, like De Suze Cadel, Pierre Alexander, Stanislaus Besson, Jean Allard, Julien Valie, Jean St. Bernard, Charles Nogues, Jean Pierre La Valette, Ignace DuBisset were a remarkable brood. All of them were themselves, as Free Coloureds, scions of a class that could have gone to Paris and escaped the petty prejudices of parochial English planters. Some of them could even have laid valid claims to titles there, since their French grandfathers were of the nobility, but they had all, to a man, chosen to commit class suicide instead; to take sides with the Free Blacks, with the slaves and with all those willing to fight for the liberation of Grenada. They were the vanguard of the new men and women of the Caribbean, and it was not just one or two of them, it was thousands scattered across a pattern of islands. La Valette had dreamt of becoming a poet, Besson, an engineer; Fedon had a passion for botany; St. Bernard was a gifted musician, Nogues liked philosophy, De Valie, was interested in the agricultural sciences—they were all in their early or mid-thirties. None of them would ever live to do the things they had secretly dreamt of doing, but together, they would strike a blow for freedom and inflict wounds upon the slave system from which it would never recover. In the end, those who did not fall in battle would be hounded down, captured and subjected to

the most atrocious tortures before they were killed. And even after their deaths their lands would be confiscated, their wives, children and relatives transported; their names expunged from the official records. Fedon knew that the class to which Ninian Home and his friends belonged was ruthless, cunning, arrogant and greedy but essentially weak. The prisoners he was holding at Mount Qua-Qua were, as a group, the epitome of that class. He knew that if he had fallen into their hands they would have shown him no mercy, since many of them believed that the only free slave should be a dead one; and that Free Blacks and Coloureds should never enjoy full rights as citizens. And yet this revolt had eroded some of their certainties. The chaos and the petty bickerings that had developed after their two defeats were symptoms of that loss of confidence in themselves. As a kind of postscript to their pyrrhonism, there was the case of a certain Mr. Wilson, who owned the Gouyave Estate. He had volunteered with some alacrity to act as guide to the first punitive expedition sent out from S. George's and had left Gouyave since the morning of the attack on the 5th, but once things did not go as he had expected,

Fearful for his life (since) Fedon's men had recently destroyed the estate of a fellow planter . . . who had apparently informed on them . . . (he, too, deserted his post and headed home).<sup>8</sup>

Taking advantage of the confusion, Fedon escalated his war of nerves against the planters and their representatives in St. George's. Under a flag of truce, De Suze Cadet, and Pierre Alexander delivered another letter to President McKenzie, demanding the surrender of the island to the insurgent forces. The letter, written in the Camp of Liberty (Camp Belvedere), by Ninian Home, and signed by forty-three of his fellow prisoners, also stated that,

General Fedon, commander of the French Republican troops now of considerable number and forty-three prisoners, request that I acquaint you with the said general's positive declaration made to me and the rest of the prisoners, that the instant an attack is made on the post where the prisoners now are confined, instantly, everyone

of these prisoners shall be put to death. We hope you will take this our representation, into your consideration and not suffer if possible, the lives of so many innocent persons to be sacrificed.<sup>12</sup>

McKenzie's reply did not give much comfort to the prisoners. It was full of bluster and defiance, saying that,

they were willing to shed the last drop of blood rather than eternally disgrace themselves and their country by a concession to men capable, in the first place, of such a proposition.<sup>13</sup>

But, Fedon, through that threat of reprisals, was warning the slave authorities to cease their killings, torture and campaigns of terror against all blacks and Free Coloureds on the pretext that they were suspected of supporting the insurgency. What Fedon succeeded in doing in the 15 months of his revolt, was to remove the slave labor foundations upon which Grenadian plantation society had been built. And as the superstructure came tumbling down, the planters, through the pogroms they carried out against slaves regardless of whether they were insurgents or not, inadvertently made a signal contribution to their own ruin.

Fedon and his slave insurgents were like a team of Samsons rocking the pillars of the temple of slavery, and bringing the structure down upon themselves. When the planters tried to reconstruct the edifice after the revolt, they could only build makeshift structures that would last less than forty years.

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That month of March 1795, was a crucial one for the insurgents. Fedon needed time to train and discipline the new recruits flocking into Camp Liberty (Belvedere). They had to be housed, clothed, fed and armed. He sent messages to Guadeloupe, telling his contacts there that the revolt had started; that not only slaves, but Free Blacks and Coloureds, some French planters and even British soldiers were joining their ranks; they therefore needed supplies; arms for the cultivators and most of all they needed naval units to harass the British

ships transporting troops to the Gouyave and Greenville areas, in an attempt to capture his headquarters and to destroy the Grenadian rebellion in its infancy.

Towards the end of March, an apocalyptic drama was being played out in the Grenadian countryside. The masters and mistresses, who had started the day calling for their slaves since 1650, were now afraid to do so. Rumors were being scattered in every direction like flocks of birds surprised in ripening corn fields. Fedon's men were suspected of being here, there and everywhere. The slaves had watched and waited after Marquis had gone up in flames; but when Fedon's insurgents, mostly raw slave recruits, inflicted two defeats on the best of the colonial forces, they became convinced that the revolt was becoming a serious threat to the system holding them in bondage. At this early stage of the revolt, a slow and almost imperceptible groundswell of opposition began to make itself felt in the Big Houses, the fields, the factories and the marketplaces of Grenada. The rhythm of slave life was somewhat different to that lived by the planters and their families. The masters and mistresses and their relatives woke up in the morning, but slaves were roused in the darkness of **fore-day-morning**. By sunrise, when the planters and their broods began to stir in their comfortable four posters, the slaves had already been up and working in the fields, the factories or the kitchens for three or four hours. A subtle change began to surface in the relations between masters and slaves once news of the revolt began to spread. The slaves began to sleep longer, to work more slowly and this gradually evolved into open defiance.

The Fedon revolt was giving to them an increasing awareness of their own power. Reading the official reports, one is left with the impression that Fedon and his followers were bottled up in Camp Liberty during most of the 15 months that the revolt lasted. Nothing could be further from the truth. Fedon had slipped in and out of his camp again and again. He knew the Grenadian countryside better than he did his own face in a mirror and Gamay and Seka provided a security ring around him everywhere he went. The people would not have fought under his leadership the way they did if he had remained like a remote deity of liberation locked up in Camp Liberty. In their Afro-Creole cosmology, even the Almighty had to be close enough to be accountable to those who worshipped him. So with Fedon, they would have wanted to see, hear and touch him. On one occa-

sion, one of his friends had said, he had even slipped in and out of St. George's one night disguised as a market woman. The standard joke of the planters was that "they all looked alike" and "they" included slaves, Free Blacks and Coloureds. It was not difficult to turn the racist clichés of the planters against them.

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When Fedon called for a general uprising of the slaves at the beginning of April, the great majority of the slave population responded to his call. He knew that to destroy the edifice of slavery and to get rid of the actual and psychological fetters of colonial oppression, the people had to destroy the visible symbols of their centuries-old servitude and humiliation: the sugar-cane fields, the barns, the plantation big houses, the factories, the workshops, the treadmills, the instruments of torture—and then they had to confront their masters with the masks of servility removed; so that they could show their rage, their laughter, their sadness or their ineluctible joy, without the fear of whippings, the stocks, the treadmill, and the bruising manacles around the neck, the wrists and the ankles for the first time since 1650. And once they had exorcised the ghosts of their vassalage, and could walk tall after stretching limbs stiff from too much kneeling; the claim that they were not human could be thrown back in the faces of those who had invented it to justify their own greed and inhumanity. Fedon knew and understood all of these things when he issued his call for a general uprising. What he was also doing at the strategic level, was fighting a war against the British colonizers on two fronts: the one front was eclectic, it included the beaches, the plains, the swamps, the valleys and the mountains and extended into the surrounding seas—it was a guerilla front—while the other was restricted to fixed positions—the lightly fortified forts dotting the strategic waist of the island, and Camp Liberty with its natural battlements that rose in steep escarpments from a series of pastures to the heights of Mount Fedon. Both the front and rear of this camp were protected by natural barriers of volcanic rock and dense clusters of trees. For a year, Fedon managed to synchronize the activities of those two fronts, but an acute shortage of arms for his thousands of fighters in the countryside, and the fact that the naval support, promised by the French never materialized, created a situation in which, at the very moment

that the entire island seemed to be in insurgent hands, it was wrested from them. The British, with their overwhelming naval and military might, were able to throw a noose around Camp Liberty and to pull it so tight that it strangled Fedon's people's revolt to death. Once this was done, the colonizers could take their time to slaughter, terrorize, assuage their wounded racial pride, and round up the thousands of unarmed cultivators and the small units of armed insurgents scattered across the countryside.

The options open to Fedon were to fight the kind of war of liberation that he fought, or to maroon-ize the struggle. In the end, whichever of those two options he had chosen would have led to his eventual defeat for the same reasons: the lack of sufficient arms and supplies from outside, and naval support that could have been either covert or overt. Fedon fought the best war that he could have fought under the circumstances, and in the century in which he lived. He also attracted to the ranks of his revolutionary struggle a cross-section of the Grenadian population that was so varied—it included every race, color, creed, caste and class—that no other leader would be able to achieve this, until Maurice Bishop and his New Jewel Movement, were to seize control of Grenada in March, 1979 exactly 184 years later.

The authorities in St. George's, huddled together in the forts that the French had started building in 1779, and that the British had completed subsequently, felt more insecure than if those massive structures on the crest of the hills that faced the sea had never been constructed. Those forts had been built to repel attacks coming from the sea and not for quelling internal rebellions. The soldiers had been trained to fight standard text-book battles, not to deal with thousands of armed and elusive insurgents.

McKenzie, President of the Council, was like Ninian Home, a typical product of the colonial ruling class. At first, this class had the martial skills, the resolution, the certainty of pioneers blazing trails across new frontiers, but the riches from sugar, coffee, cocoa and other prized products produced by slave labors, and house slaves to do their bidding from morning to night, had turned them into pampered, semi-literate fops. Their kith and kin in England, though willing to tolerate them because of their money, saw them as having all the boring bad taste of the new rich. After centuries of living on the backs of slaves, these British settlers produced enough art, literature

and music to fit snugly inside of a thimble that would still have room for a finger. Those who did produce anything worthwhile, left for the metropole in time to escape the blight on creativity that the stultifying slave environment imposed.

McKenzie, hurrying from one fort to the other, oscillated between bluster and bravado, and whining. He wrote to the Governor-Chief in Barbados, telling him, in a letter dated March 31st, 1795, that the best way of crushing the rebellion was to approach Fedon's camp from several directions simultaneously, since this would make it difficult for him (Fedon) to take up new positions in the surrounding forests; and that forces should be deployed from three strategic points: Grenville, Charlotte Town, and St. George's.

In this official communication, McKenzie was playing the role of Commander-in-Chief and military strategist, but at the time that he was dreaming up those plans, Fedon's revolutionary forces had already burst out of Camp Liberty and were in firm control of half a dozen key strategic areas in the island.

Just over a week later, when a surfeit of bad news, including Fedon's letter demanding the surrender of all the British subjects had overwhelmed him, McKenzie, the pampered, irresolute colonial, was whining to General Vaughn, the Commander-in-Chief in Barbados, that,

The plans I have formed for the restoration of tranquility were the best which I could devise but they have been uniformly defeated by some sinister accident. My profession is not arms and of course, it cannot be expected that the army will act under me with that vigor and confidence which they would feel when commanded by an experienced general.<sup>14</sup>

He then, inadvertently, paid a back-handed compliment to Fedon, and his insurgents, by suggesting that a General should be put in charge of the British and colonial forces to "rid the country of an evil which at present threatens to ruin it."<sup>15</sup>

The rulers in St. George's had responded to the Fedon rebellion by literally falling over themselves to crush it before they had bothered to make a thorough analysis of the situation. They allowed them-

selves to be guided by the atavistic reflexes of slave owners rushing to teach recalcitrant slaves and bumptious Free Coloureds a lesson, rather than by reason. Fedon, and his Revolutionary Council, knowing those planters well, deliberately goaded them into taking the ill-advised and hasty actions that they did take. Without an appreciation of how widespread the rebellion was, the colonial authorities hastened to strangle it, in what they believed to be, its small cradle. They suffered five defeats in less than three months before it dawned upon them that they were fighting against formidable revolutionary forces that were supported by the overwhelming majority of Grenadians.

Two major and two minor defeats were inflicted upon the British forces within a fortnight. General Lindsay, immediately upon arriving from Barbados to take over as Governor of Grenada, had set out with a force of around a thousand men, including 150 seasoned troops who had landed at Gouyave from the frigate H.M.S. Beaulieu, to attack Camp Liberty. He bivouaced on Mt. Felix on the night of the 17th. During the night, heavy rains fell, and showers continued to pour down for another five days and nights. Fever broke out among the demoralized troops; and their even more demoralized leader, General Lindsay, having caught the fever, shot himself while he was in a state of delirium, on the morning of March 22nd, 1795.<sup>16</sup>

Captain Guerdon, the same officer whom Fedon had lured into a trap and soundly defeated at Gouyave, landed at La Baye, with 200 men and tried to capture Pilot Hill, a strategic point from which supplies to Camp Liberty could be blocked. When the Guerdon detachment entered the Paradise area, they were harassed by insurgents who attacked and retreated. As they pressed forward, a shot from a nine pounder killed a Grenadier. The prudent Guerdon, who seemed to believe in the adage that discretion was the better part of valor, retreated, and from a safe promontory saw that Pilot Hill was guarded by two cannons and 200 insurgents with muskets. Guerdon estimated that it would have cost him one third of his force to capture Pilot Hill, and once they had captured it he was not sure that they could hold it.

At dawn, on April 8th, a major attack was launched against Camp Liberty by a combined force of over a thousand men under Colonel Campbell (he would soon after his defeat be promoted to the rank of General).

This was the area in which Fedon had grown up. He knew every

square meter of that earth under his feet, every landmark, every hidden spring, every stranded rock, every secret hiding place. The trees, the wind, the golden afternoons, the heavy rains monsooning for weeks on end, were all familiar to him. He had, as an infant, fallen asleep with his mother singing lullabies to him about all wanderers and troubadours of Grenada returning to their green hills of home finally. He was a son of those green hills. It is said that Columbus, describing what Grenada looked like to the Sovereigns of Castille, had crumpled a sheet of paper and placed it on the table. The table-top, he explained would be the sea, and the crumpled paper the island rising out of it. It would eventually take a formidable array of British naval and military forces, plus Spanish reinforcements from Trinidad, to dislodge Fedon. But in that great battle of April 8th, he used the same tactics that he had rehearsed fighting against Guerdon on their first encounter, only, on this occasion, he had had time to improve on those tactics. The first insurgents that Colonel Campbell's men saw looked like slaves. They were dressed in torn pantaloons and frayed straw hats, and they held their muskets carelessly, some of them were even chewing sugar-cane and grinning from ear to ear. The disciplined British troops seeing them, were convinced that they would run like rabbits after the first volley was fired, and they were not disappointed. When the first shots were fired the insurgents broke and ran, scampering up the mountainside. The troops followed, like hounds released from their kennels, for the hunt. In the distance, they could see other detachments of insurgents retreating higher up the mountain, but all of a sudden, they had to come to a halt. Trees, with their branches interlocked, circled the mountain like a gigantic wreath, and interspersed among them were those with murderous thorns. The minstrels, who had lured them to that impassable barricade, were suddenly transformed into disciplined fighters who raked their exposed ranks with a withering fire. The bravest of the attackers tried to capture an insurgent cannon, but heavy rains had made the mountainside slippery, and the volleys from sharp-shooters, rendered their attempts futile and suicidal. One hundred and fifty seamen whose ship was anchored in St. George's harbor, had volunteered to go and teach the insurgents a lesson. Eleven of them were killed and fourteen wounded. Colonel Campbell's column, alone, suffered more than seventy killed and wounded. It was a day of disaster for the British. Their imperial historians, however, by understatement, omission

and silence, leave us accounts of their defeats by black or any other freedom fighters that are so garbled, one has to become an historical detective to reconstruct the truth about those epic victories against seemingly impossible odds.

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Fedon's brother, Jacques, was the leader of the "minstrel" insurgents on the lower slopes where the battle began. He waited until the last minute to ensure that all his men had reached the safety of the barrier of fallen trees, and his body was riddled with musket-balls. Four brave insurgents, ignoring the enemy fire, rushed back and reclaimed his body. In the midst of the great victory, the news of Jacques' death cast a pall of sadness over Camp Liberty.

The abengs announced his death from the mountain-tops and requiem drums beat out their rhythms of sorrow all night. Netta, and her daughters, Gamay, and the women fighters, let their tears fall upon his lifeless face. But, after midnight, the rhythms of the drums beat faster and faster, and Gamay picked up Jacques' body and danced in a circle holding it close to her bosom.

He had liked dancing when he was alive, and in the African tradition, she was sending his spirit to join those ancestors who were dancers and warriors.

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Fedon had also received news that the defeated British troops, constantly harassed by his armed partisans, had seized dozens of unarmed and innocent blacks—men, women and children and put them to death.

This news had been brought to him by two British soldiers who had deserted their units to join the insurgents. They had come to take their place with a dozen others, who convinced of the righteousness of Fedon's cause, had joined his revolutionary forces. On the same day, eight soldiers from a Major Wright's detachment, overcome by fatigue and lying by the roadside, were captured and taken to Camp Liberty.

On April 6th, Fedon wrote to McKenzie complaining once again about the barbarous way in which, not only captured insurgents, but

unarmed black cultivators were being rounded up, tortured, killed and subjected to the most inhuman treatment.<sup>17</sup> He had also suggested that McKenzie, and his henchmen in the colonial government, were carrying out their own scorched-earth policy. "It is with indignation that we see the destruction of this flourishing colony by fires with which we are surrounded and which are set by our enemies"<sup>18</sup> he had written. Obviously, the aim of this scorched-earth policy was to destroy the food farms of the insurgents and their supporters in the countryside. This was a classic colonialist tactic that survives to this day in countries where armed struggles against neo-colonial tyrannies are being carried out.

In the Grenadian slave rebellion, the slaves were burning the hated symbols of greed and oppression—the big houses, the estates where crops were raised for export and the factories in which they had labored without wages for centuries—but the masters and their agents were putting to the torch the food crops that would have made the former slaves independent of them.

In his letter, Fedon had added a footnote that was not designed to assuage McKenzie's despair:

It is with the greatest satisfaction that we see the arrival in our camps of a number of English soldiers engaging themselves under the flag of liberty and the French Republic. We faithfully offer all those that will follow their example the same good treatment.<sup>19</sup>

The names of those British revolutionists, who had joined the ranks of slaves rebelling against their masters, were not recorded. They had chosen to fight side by side with the slaves under a Free Coloured leader. They, too, were oppressed, whipped, underpaid and brutalized by their officers, and they occupied a limbo-world that was neither slave nor free. Sometimes they were press-ganged into service and on other occasions recruited while they were rotting away on prison ships. McKenzie, reflecting that infinite capacity of planters to be surprised by the reactions of those they oppress, had declared that he had found both the response of the slaves to Fedon's call, the actions of the Free Coloureds and the defections of the British soldiers "incredible".

Jacques was buried in an unmarked grave on the slopes of Mount Fedon in the midst of the fallen fighters he had commanded. He had requested that no priest should take part in his burial ceremony and his request was respected.

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During the April 8th battle, Netta Fedon and her daughters, Gamay and her womens corps had fought side by side with the men. When some of the gallant Free Coloured officers had objected, Netta had told them that shots striking the enemy could not be identified by their gender.

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After Jacques' burial, 48 of the 51 planters who had been prisoners since the beginning of the revolt were executed. Among them was Ninnian Home, the former Lieutenant Governor. He had died grovelling, begging for his life and offering to pay Fedon a huge ransom. The execution, according to an official colonial account, "was carried out in the presence of Fedon's wife and his two daughters, who viewed the spectacle with a kind of protean detachment."<sup>20</sup> Three of the prisoners were spared—Dr. Hay, who had worked with great dedication amongst the sick and wounded, Mr. Kerr, the son-in-law of Chevalier de Suze (the Chevalier was one of Fedon's chief aides, and along with Gamay, was the oldest of the Revolutionary Council members), and Reverend Francis McMahon, the Anglican Rector.

General Lindsay, having eliminated himself from the lists of the Tournament of Colonial Despots by suicide, was replaced by General Nicholls. Nicholls assumed the overall command of the colonial forces in Grenada on April 16, 1795,<sup>21</sup> and lost little time in rushing into battle. He brought along with him a group of trusted negro slaves from Barbados. These were beefed up with loyal Grenadian slaves formed into the Corps of Loyal Black Rangers. The corps was divided into groups of eighty, each with a white Lieutenant in charge. Major John Farquharson was Commanding Officer of the corps.<sup>22</sup>

Ten days after assuming command, General Nicholls launched a massive attack on the insurgent positions at Post Royal and Pilot hill. The combined British forces numbered around 1,400. This in-

cluded Captain Watkins' detachment of 900, troops of Light Cavalry and the Corps of Loyal Black Rangers. Fedon once again resorted to his tactics of harassment and withdrawal. With a strong frontal attack being pressed home against Pilot Hill, Major Wright's units attempted to cut off the retreat of the defenders, but they slipped away unnoticed to their fortress at Camp Liberty, and the large enemy force, supported by fire from gunboats, knew better than to attempt to pursue them.

While the British General was carrying out his textbook-style military assault on Pilot Hill, 500 of Fedon's insurgents struck deep into the rear of his forces. They attacked a detachment of regular soldiers and militia quartered in the St. David's church at 1 a.m.<sup>23</sup> Creeping up on the sentries, they killed them silently. Seka's Maroons were in the vanguard of this early morning assault group. Once the sentries were taken care of, insurgents with muskets and pistols were positioned at all the windows, while others stood in two rows facing each other at the entrance and exit to the church with their cutlasses, swords and poignards at the ready. When a signal was given, they made a great noise. The soldiers and militiamen, roused suddenly from their sleep, milled around in great confusion, and their officers bellowing orders to them only added to the chaos. The insurgents fired volley after volley into their midst, and those who rushed outside were cut down. After that brilliantly planned raid and the indecisive battle for Pilot Hill, the government forces returned to St. George's to lick their wounds, and to plan new strategies. General Nicholls decided to carry out a war of attrition against the insurgents. He began to build forts in several strategic areas of the island. His aim was to prevent the Fedon forces from establishing other strongholds surrounded by an armed and sympathetic population, and to prevent arms and supplies from reaching the insurgents both from local sources and from abroad. But on October 10th, when the General's program should have been well underway, two ships from St. Lucia arrived with arms, supplies and two hundred volunteers. This inter-island corps of freedom fighters was the first of its kind to be formed since the colonial era began. It included Free Black and Coloured planters, white Jacobins, escaped slaves and a unit of Black Caribs. The volunteers had come from Martinique, Guadeloupe, St. Kitts, St. Lucia and Dominica. News of the rebellion had spread from island to island like burning ashes after a volcanic eruption.

The armed volunteers marched into Camp Liberty triumphantly. Although the government in St. George's had posted lookouts everywhere along the coast, the ships had sailed in and out undetected. It was a boost to the morale of the insurgents to see those comrades-in-arms arrive, but they already had a surfeit of volunteers, what they needed were enough guns, military equipment and supplies to set up half a dozen Camp Liberties, and naval support. Fedon had sent back a message with the two ships requesting that St. George's be bombarded while he staged an attack on the rear of the town. In the meantime, his strategy remained one of keeping the enemy off balance.

Later in the month, on October 21st, 80 infantrymen arrived from Barbados to reinforce the government troops.<sup>24</sup> By October, the population of St. George's had more than doubled. The planters, who had not joined the revolt, had been driven from their estates, and were huddled together in the Capital with their families and those house slaves who had stayed with them. The military presence was everywhere, and there was the inevitable friction between soldiers and civilians. Several of the planters had complained to General Nicholls about soldiers making passes at their wives and daughters. Nicholls, a no-nonsense military type, found their carping and their complaints irritating, and was heard to remark after a visit by a prominent planter, that Fedon was a splendid chap, and it was a pity that he was fighting on the other side.

But, with only a trickle of the normal volume of food supplies coming from the countryside around St. George's, everything had to be brought in by ship. There were enterprising traders who plied between Trinidad, Tobago, Bequia and the Venezuelan coast, and sold their produce at inflated prices. There was more money than goods to be purchased in St. George's. In August of '95, the Grenadian Legislature had sent an urgent petition to the House of Commons, complaining about the extreme hardships, and asking for a loan of 100,000 pounds, 40,000 pounds of which was to be allocated for purchasing provisions for the beleaguered settler population and those slaves who had remained loyal.<sup>25</sup> By 1796, those complaints had become increasingly strident and sounded more and more desperate. The former slaves, who had virtual control of the countryside, did not suffer from food shortages. With rich agricultural lands at their disposal for the first time, they grew more than enough food for them-

selves, and the surplus went to the insurgents. They had reverted to a system of communal production and sharing; and for the exchange of goods, since money had become useless outside of St. George's, they resorted to barter. It was extraordinary that in a year, they had constructed an entirely new social and economic system with its own rhythms of production and its own structures of distribution and exchange. It was a trial run for emancipation which, despite the setbacks that followed in the wake of the revolt, would come in less than forty years. The lesson that the revolt taught once again, was that grass-roots economies and social systems<sup>25</sup> are far more flexible and resilient in times of crisis than highly structured ones.

Bottled up in St. George's, the British troops, making forays into the countryside time and again, vented their spite on helpless black citizens. During one of those forays, a detachment of British soldiers became a lynch-mob: 19 unarmed black citizens were seized at Grand Bacolet on October 26th, carried off to St. George's, and hanged, on suspicion that they were Fedon sympathizers.<sup>26</sup> The hanging took place in public so that the planters and their ladies could be entertained by the sight of the convulsive black bodies hanging at the end of ropes.

Fedon's men were incensed by this act of public murder. Under a flag of truce, the Cavalier de Suze delivered a letter from his Commander-in-Chief, to General Nicholls, saying that the rights of all Grenadians should be respected by the troops under him; and affirming that the edifice of slavery had been cast down and it was the will of the majority of Grenadians that it should remain in the dust where it had fallen, for all time.

Fedon, knowing that the British troops hated fighting during the long rainy seasons, always went on the offensive when the rains came. In December, the insurgents attacked Pilot Hill in order to test the strength of its defences, and when they were beaten back, they moved on to the strategic Post Royal area and set up a military post there. From this post, they could harass British forces moving along the coast, and they could also offer some protection to their supporters in the Grand Bacolet area.

Since the French had not provided the naval support Fedon had asked for repeatedly, he mounted his own naval operation. On February 18th, 1796, the insurgents, using two large armed canoes, surprised and seized the "Hostess Quickly". Boarding this government

vessel like buccaneers, they killed three members of the crew and captured the Captain. Captain Wright, in command at Pilot Hill, having repulsed several ground attacks that had been launched against him by the insurgents, was taken completely by surprise when the cannons on the "Hostess Quickly" began to bombard his positions. Ten of his men were killed and fourteen wounded. The other three hundred abandoned the post after a siege that had lasted for nearly a week.<sup>27</sup>

By March of 1796, the entire island of Grenada, except for the capital St. George's, and the area immediately around it, was in insurgent hands. The offensive Fedon had mounted, backed by the majority of the population, had cleared the countryside of British Troops, in six of the island's seven parishes. His troops were now battle-seasoned, and new leaders had sprung up like a harvest of dragons' teeth.

The British outposts fell like banana trees in a hurricane at Observatory, St. Patrick's, Megrin, Calivigny; in addition, the insurgents captured and held Mt. St. Margaret; Captain Josey's troopers swept the British forces out of Mabouya and Dalincourt; and new posts were set up in the strategic area near Vandomme, and at Beausejour. St. George's was surrounded and outflanked. President McKenzie, who had spoken so heroically about being willing to shed the last drop of blood to defend the plantocracy, was now a broken creature, mumbling to himself for hours on end, and calling plaintively for his slaves to minister to his peevish needs. He resigned and left Grenada.

Samuel Mitchell, the senior member of the Council took over as President. The regroupment of legislative and military forces had begun.

Father McMahon, who had become one of Fedon's advisers, at the height of his apparent success, had kept cautioning him in his cynical fashion that he should never trust the British because instead of pride and principles, they had a matchless low cunning. The Spanish had pride, he said, and the Highland Scots had pride and the Irish had pride and the French had more pride than was good for them, but he declared that eventually, they would all loose out to the British who never allowed questions of pride to stand in the way of their lust for power. Fedon always listened to him, smiled, and said nothing.

The planners in Barbados were convinced that the only way in which the Fedon revolt could be crushed, would be first, to capture his headquarters, and then to pacify the countryside. But this was eas-

ier said than done. The three generals responsible for planning the attack on Camp Liberty and the other strongholds in insurgent hands, were Nicholls, Abercromby and Campbell - three Generals, and sundry Admirals and senior officers! They were all planning to defeat a man whose classrooms in military science had been actual battle-fields, whose lessons were learnt in the heat of battle and whose classmates were a nation of people in revolt against slavery and colonialism. The advantage that Fedon had over those military planners, was that he was fighting a just war of liberation while they were fighting to reshackle slaves who had abolished their slavery and to rebuild an edifice of despotism over them. For Fedon, war and the politics of liberation were fruit from the same tree, while for those British military and naval planners, war was like a game of chess.

One shifted the pieces on a checkerboard to win or lose the game. But their chess pieces were armies and navies, and whole countries, oceans and seas were their checkerboard. They knew nothing about an enslaved peoples' passion for freedom.

What kind of man was this Julien Fedon who had planned a revolt in secrecy for years, and suddenly, on a March morning, had burst into the arena of history, when he and his insurgents captured the town of Marquis? During his short lifetime, he had written very little, and had spoken even less. Contrary to the tradition that would be set by the charismatic West Indian leaders who would follow after him, he was not an orator. He listened a great deal and said very little. Perhaps no leader from his class had listened to the slaves, the down-trodden and the despised in Grenada with such infinite patience and compassion before he had arrived on the scene. The few people he allowed to get close to him loved him without really knowing him. In an environment in which someone as well off as he was, could easily have given himself over to excesses, his habits were austere and spartan. He had a keen intelligence and was a shrewd judge of character. Because he said so little, but encouraged others to confide in him freely, it was as though when people were with him they were always willing to open the door to their very souls, while he kept the door to his own perpetually shut. In battle, his bravery bordered on recklessness and he was the bravest of the brave, but he seemed to have a charmed life, and was never even slightly wounded. He swore that he would never be taken prisoner, and in the end he stood by his

oath. The people placed their absolute trust in him, and in return his faith in them was boundless.

In 1796, when most of Grenada was controlled by his insurgents, he turned his considerable organizational skills towards reconstructing his country and creating a free society for all. He knew that he would have to do this from an agricultural base: first to feed the people, and then, with the estates and plantations, and all arable land owned communally, to continue growing crops for export. His semi-feudal estate at Belvedere, which was transformed into a peoples' Camp Liberty, had provided him with a model for all of Grenada. Before he had become a revolutionary leader, he was a successful farmer who had inherited an estate that had already been in the Fedon family for four generations. He loved the land, and knew that one had to give back to it, as much as one took out of it. The planters and the slave owners bemoaned the fact that in the space of a year of the revolt, Grenada, a once flourishing country, had become a scene of wild desolation. But for the liberated slaves it had, on the contrary, become for the first time since the Caribs had been exterminated their Promised Land. It was slave labor that had humanized the Grenadian landscapes, and it was Fedon's plan that free labor should inherit those landscapes for all time.

Fedon could at times be hard and inflexible, but he was always in the end fair and generous, and he had exquisite manners. It was often said of him that he seldom raised his voice. The Chevalier de Suze had pleaded with him not to execute Ninian Home, and his planter companions. But Fedon had remained adamant. British Soldiers and planter-militiamen were hunting down and killing blacks in the woods outside of St. George's as if they were ramier or armadillos, and he felt that he had to send a clear message to them that those excesses had to be stopped or the insurgents would resort to a policy of "an eye for an eye." Netta, his daughters, and Gamay had supported him in his argument with de Suze. There were those who said that he had a messianic complex. If he did, then he was a quiet messiah, and a reasonably modest one. As a military commander, he has few peers in the annals of Caribbean history. In less than a year, he was able to transform raw slave recruits into a superb fighting force. Fighting against seemingly impossible odds, always brought out the best in him. He was like a comet, lighting up the skies and leaving the memory of an incandescent splendour etched upon the palimpsest of the

new Caribbean man and woman's psyche. He had burst upon the center stage of Grenadian history, and his supporting cast, was a whole people, a group that was, in essence, a microcosm of all mankind. No leader had succeeded before him in bringing such a group together to fight in a modern war of liberation. And after Fedon had played his leading role brilliantly, the curtain had come down on his life when he was still in his prime, and he disappeared in the wings forever. But the fact that when he was alive no one ever really knew him, and no one had ever discovered how he died, has made it easier for him to live in people's imaginations. For, many generations after his disappearance, there were those who swore that they had seen him in the mountains, the valleys, the plains or on the beaches of Grenada. And for the people in the countryside, when they declared that Fedon lives, it was a statement of fact, because there is no proof of how or when he died.

Unlike so many of his Free Coloured peers, Fedon had never travelled to Europe. He was content with visiting Guadeloupe, Martinique, St. Lucia and Trinidad. His father had taken him sailing as a child, and by the time he was fifteen, he could sail around Grenada, and island hop from one Grenadine island to the other. The theory that he was drowned on his way to Trinidad, therefore, is a far-fetched one. June is not the month of hurricanes. But although Fedon's travel was strictly local, he had acquired a good grasp of international affairs. It is said, that a document that came into his hands by accident, and one that had exercised some influence on his young mind, was Benjamin Franklin's letter to the Congress of the United States, in which he had denounced slavery. This letter had been translated into French, and his tutor Father Marquez had given it to him to read. When Victor Hugues arrived in the Caribbean, and began spreading his hot gospel of revolution, that gospel burnt its way through the parochial conventions that were hobbling the minds of Free Coloureds like Fedon and his land-owning friends.

After the initial shock, the disbelief, the fierce debates that ensued and, of course, with the abomination of slavery everywhere around them as an object lesson, they became new converts and wanted to change not only Grenada, but the world. But after a while, this eclectic dream crystallized into the reality of planning to change Grenada; and Fedon, with his habit of silence, and his gift for expressing his ideas in the fewest words possible, became their leader.

They all, that group of Free Coloureds, understood more clearly after meeting Hugues, the parasitical relationship between the metropolitan countries like France and Britain, and their colonies. Hugues had explained that the mother-country-colonial relationship was a vampire-victim one; that the French Bourbon's taste for the blood and sweat of colonial victims had been cultivated in their own towns, cities, and feudal backyards where their own mercilessly exploited peasants and workers were the sufferers; and when the age of colonization dawned, that habit of blood-sucking and exploitation had travelled with the colonizers. The Jacobins, he said, were putting a stop to the evils of exploitation at its source in metropolitan France. His mission, he declared, was to appeal to the downtrodden in the French colonies to rise up and join forces with their Jacobin comrades in France to replace a symbiosis of oppressor and oppressed with one of a liberated France and a liberated overseas empire.

Fedon and his Free Coloured friends met regularly to discuss both local and international affairs, but they could not keep pace with the shifting panorama of political changes taking place in France. What Fedon understood, was that revolution in every country had its own time-table, its own secret rhythms, its own historical imperatives, and the French Revolution could not be exported lock, stock and barrel to the Caribbean. However, in colonies like Grenada and Haiti, it had acted as a catalyst, blowing away a patina of ashes that covered burning embers of discontent and fanning them into flame. It was a pity, too, that Fedon did not have agents and lobbyists in France the way Toussaint had had throughout his slave rebellion.

When Fedon was asking for help, the Convention in Paris which had supplanted the Commune, was mesmerizing itself with the sheer inanity of its debates, and the government of France was teetering on the edge of bankruptcy. At the same time, the armies of France, still revolutionary to the core, were winning stupendous victories on the battlefields of Europe against monarchist forces gathered from every corner of Europe. And while the Convention dawdled and debated, and its legislative and executive appendages remained paralyzed, Royalist plots sprung up around it like autumn mushrooms in the Bois de Boulogne. One of those plots incited the National Guard to attack the Tuileries while the Convention was in session. At this junction, unknown to Fedon and his group, one of those strange accidents of history occurred: The Convention sent for Colonel Dumas, the son

of a black Martinican mother, and a French Count, to put the insurrection down. Dumas, one of the most popular officers in the Republican Army, had just returned from the Italian campaigns, during which he had become a legend with his troops. His wife hid the message for five hours, and Napoleon Bonaparte, then a Lieutenant, was summoned instead. Bonaparte, defended the Tuileries and routed the Guard and the mob supporting it with a whiff of grapeshot. If Dumas had answered that summons, Fedon, would have had an ally in the corridors of power in Paris, and things might have gone differently for him. Those events took place in 1795, the year the Grenadian revolt had started. Fedon could have bombarded that impotent Convention with requests for every day of the fifteen months his revolt lasted, and his pleas would have gone unheeded.

With marginal help from the French Republican Government, therefore, Fedon, at the head of the Grenadian people, fought an epic struggle against the might of Imperial Britain. In March 1796, with most of Grenada in insurgent hands and the planters and their families huddled together in St. George's, General Nicholls mounted a new counter-revolutionary offensive. The General had received massive reinforcements of infantry, cavalry, and artillery. And that Legislature of planters and colonial leeches, who had elected and appointed themselves to office, passed a law on March 19th, 1796 empowering General Nicholls to requisition "as many male slaves, horses and mules as he required" for his offensive.<sup>28</sup> In short, those massive reinforcements would enable him to scour the countryside, and re-enslave those who had freed themselves. Those British Imperial forces which prided themselves on their great military and naval traditions, had become slave-catchers in Grenada.

Fedon's spies and Gamay's agents brought back regular reports about the massive build-up of troops and equipment in St. George's. The Corps of Loyal Black Rangers was doubled in strength with the addition of local slave recruits and another slave contingent from Barbados. Fedon, and his Revolutionary Command, knew that the British forces would try to throw a noose around Camp Liberty, and with their overwhelming numbers and fire power, tighten it until he and his best fighters were killed or captured. The French had used the same strategy against Kaierouanne, the Carib leader, 142 years earlier. The triumverate of Generals, Nicholls, Abercromby and Campbell, were under orders from the War Office to crush the Grenadian

revolt as quickly as possible. That revolt was having an unsettling effect on slave populations everywhere in the Caribbean archipelago, and if it had been allowed to continue into the 19th century, slavery, as an institution already becoming a financial liability to the planter class, and reeling under the blows being dealt it by the decline of British West Indian sugar and the growing strength of the East India lobby, would very likely have been violently abolished by the slaves themselves at least 30 years before the emancipation act was passed by the British Parliament. Fedon's plan was to disperse enough of his forces throughout the liberated areas, so that if the noose was tightened, and Camp Liberty taken, the revolution would continue in the mountains, the forests and whenever guerrillas could be hidden in the midst of the people. The Plan of the British Generals on the other hand, was that if the insurgents were the fish, and the people the lake in which they swam, they would drain the lake to get at the fish. In short, it was a plan for genocide. This plan was carried out systematically for more than a decade after Camp Liberty fell.

The Corps of Loyal Black Rangers was used as one of the principal instruments for the implementation of that genocidal policy. Those Rangers were the scavengers of the revolution—the hangmen, the informers, the spies, the jailers—and they performed their unpleasant tasks for less than two shillings per day. General Nicholls made meticulous plans for the counter-offensive against Fedon and his insurgents. Gone were the days when arrogant senior British officers believed that a few salvos of grapeshot and the appearance of their doughty regulars in splendid uniforms, were enough to frighten Fedon's slave army into submission. Those black freedom fighters were now treated with a respect bordering on awe.

Days before Nicholls launched his attack, long lines of slaves, encouraged by whips and occasional prods with bayonets, brought on their bent backs, enough equipment, supplies and ammunition, to supply half again as many troops as he was about to use. On March 22nd, with an army of over a thousand, he attacked and recaptured Post Royal Hill, the strategic gateway to the entire Marquis Bay area. The British accounts claim that 300 insurgents were killed in that fiercely fought battle. Their losses, obviously under-stated, were officially recorded as 40 dead, but no figures were given for their wounded.<sup>29</sup>

Fedon, who had taken part in that battle for Post Royal Hill, was

able to gauge with some accuracy, the recently augmented strength of the enemy. La Vallette, and his unit, held their position until the last man had fallen. De Suze was wounded and he died the following day. Fedon knew that the principal aim of the British planners was to capture his headquarters, and to do that, they would have to seize its strategic approaches to it. After capturing Post Royal, their next move would be against Pilot Hill, and with the massive forces they were throwing into battle, it would have been far too costly in men and material for the insurgents to hold it. Fedon therefore ordered the evacuation of Pilot Hill, a post that had already changed hands several times since the revolt began.

It took three months after Post Royal had fallen, for the British to build up and assemble the forces and supplies needed to launch their final attack on Camp Liberty.

\* \* \*

In the meantime, Fedon received many delegations; groups of Free Blacks, Coloureds and of irregulars from the mountains of St. Andrew's; cultivators from the dry and dusty plains around Point Salines; fishermen from settlements dotting the indented south coast, the rocky promontories and the inscrutable cliffs at Sauteurs; they came with complaints, messages of solidarity and gifts of food and supplies. They had so little to share, and yet they made generous contributions to the cause. Fedon in his quiet and gracious fashion received them all and made them feel that they were special guests. The old women treated him like one of their grandsons. They touched his face and held his hands, and advised Netta to make sure that he slept enough and had enough to eat; and the young women lowered their eyes and called him "Papa Fedon". In the year since the revolt had started, Fedon had come as close to the people as flesh to sinew. If he could have armed them, they would have been invincible! There must have been times when the rage inside him was almost overpowering, and he would have had to pause, and swallow it and wait until it dissolved itself. The cultivators complained again and again about the slave-catching forays that were being carried out deep in the countryside by the army and militia. At first, a black spy would be sent into a community, and he would pretend that he was an insurgent, and when he found out where the people were hiding and maintaining

their provision farms, he would lead a raiding party into their midst. This subterfuge worked a few times. Seka's Maroons, however, stepped in and turned the tables on the traitors: they would allow the spies in, and then set up an ambush for the raiding party and wipe it out.

\* \* \*

But those were side shows. The main event began on June 10th. General Ralph Abercromby, who had arrived from Barbados to take over as Commander-in-Chief, sent his most seasoned troops to retake the Dougalston port. Captain Josey, who was in command, against Fedon's orders, surrendered to General Nicholls. Fedon, who was bivouaced in a forest north of the post, escaped with three hundred of his crack insurgents. They cut through the ring of British soldiers like a machette through a green coconut, and trying to lure the enemy to follow them, moved to their base on Mount Fedon. Nicholls resisted the temptation. He had studied Fedon's tactics well. Nine days later, having brought up fresh supplies and assembled every available British fighting unit on the island, Abercromby launched a three pronged attack on Camp Liberty from the Palmiste beach.

The British account of this final engagement stated, that

General Campbell was to attack from Black Forest and Mount St. Margaret after first disposing of the insurgents there. Count D'Heillimer who was in command of the Lowenstein Jaggers and the Corps of Royal Etangers together with Colonel Gledstanes, who commanded the 57th Regiment, were both to assault the headquarters of Fedon's camp-Camp of Liberty; the latter was to attack from the head of the Grand Roy Valley by Mount Granby, while the former, D'Heillimer, was to attack from the Gouyave side of the camp. The Jaggers were well trained in this kind of forest warfare. They climbed up the mountain silently during the night and at dawn, launched a surprise attack on the insurgents at a post called 'Vigie'. The latter fled and were

hotly pursued to their camp at Mount Qua-Qua . . . vicious fighting ensued; the losses on Fedon's side were enormous while the government forces suffered losses of 9 dead and 55 wounded.<sup>30</sup>

The insurgents have left us no accounts of this crucial battle. Netta was killed fighting in that final engagement. Groups of insurgents and their officers, rather than surrender, leaped down the precipitous mountains to certain death, preferring mass suicide to capture; they had followed in the footsteps of Kaierouanne, and his Carib warriors 142 years later. Fedon, a group of his officers and stragglers from his decimated elite corps escaped. He knew every trail and every secret mountain path in that area in which he had grown up. Gamay, Seka and his two daughters escaped with him. Abercromby had offered a reward of £ 500 (pounds) to the soldier who brought him Fedon's head. But with a whole army combing every nook and cranny in the country, the indomitable Fedon vanished. Those who knew the circumstances of his disappearance carried the secret with them to their graves, and everywhere in that countryside where epic battles were fought the people still say that Fedon is alive.

The slave rebellion did not end with Fedon's defeat. Seka, and his Maroons once more retreated to their mountain fastnesses in St. Andrew's. They and their descendants continued fighting right up to the time that the Emancipation Act was passed by the British Parliament.

According to official estimates, the revolt:

had resulted in a loss of property estimated at 2.5 million pounds . . . Seven thousand slaves lost their lives; sugar works, rum distilleries and other buildings were destroyed on some 65 estates; cattle, horses and mules, valued at . . . 65,000 pounds were destroyed. Other buildings, not generally associated directly with sugar production, on thirty-five estates were burnt to the ground. The crops for the years 1794-1796 were lost. Those insurgents who were later captured were all executed and the properties, as well as those of all other insurgents, were appropriated by the state after

all claims against them were settled. A number of attained persons were condemned to transportation; among them were 143 slaves, 86 adult free-coloured and eight children. These were taken to Santo Domingo in 1797 by ships owned by James and John McBurnie who received the contract.<sup>31</sup>

In June 1808, twelve years after the revolt had been crushed, those scavengers of the revolution, the Corps of Royal Black Rangers, were still hounding down insurgents. It took a whole detachment of them to capture Captain Jacques Chadeau. He was one of the last of the Fedon lieutenants to be apprehended. A jealous woman had apparently informed on him.

He was condemned to death and hanged. His decomposing body was left dangling from the gallows on Mount Eloi (Cherry Hill). But on the fourth day, the corpse disappeared. It had been placed on that hilltop as a grisly warning to those still harbouring dreams of rebellion. However, the colonial-slave authorities, much to their chagrin, found that the gallows with its rotting corpse did not intimidate the people in the way that they had intended.

Instead, the spot where Jacques Chadeau was hanged became a secret shrine of resistance.

For a long time after the hanging there were those who swore that on a moon-bright night they had seen Fedon ride up on a white charger, cut the body down and gallop away with it in a sack across his saddle. And for decades it was whispered in the slave quarters that night after night some brave souls, risking death if they were caught, placed flowers, African fetish gifts and bowls of food under the gallows to sustain Chadeau on his journey to the ancestral spirit world of great warriors. Besides, before a year had gone by, every one of the Loyal Black Rangers who had taken part in the capture and hanging of Jacques Chadeau, died mysteriously.

Julien Fedon left us no manifestos, no entertaining memoirs, no resounding revolutionary nostrums. Like Kaierouanne before him, he speaks instead through his imperishable deeds. His final statement to his insurgents tells us more than a whole volume of speeches. He declared with a pristine simplicity:

The hour will strike again and again until victory's won!

\* \* \*

The Fedon revolt left the Grenadian planters and the British administration in a state of uneasiness that bordered on paranoia. In the midst of boasting that they had crushed and destroyed every vestige of the revolt, they were as late as 1834 maintaining a military establishment that consisted of seven militia regiments, and the records state that,

The St. George's regiment consisted of 21 officers and 389 non-commissioned officers and privates; the St. John's, 14 officers and 70 N.C.O's and privates; the St. Andrew's, 15 officers and 94 N.C.O's; St. David's, 15 officers and 68 N.C.O's and privates; and Carriacou eleven officers and 68 N.C.O's and privates. In addition there were troops of Light Dragoons consisting of 7 officers and 29 N.C.O's and other ranks; and two officers and 25 N.C.O's of the Loyal Black Rangers. Together, the military establishment amounted to 97 officers and 853 N.C.O's and privates, and cost between £19,000 and £23,000 (per year) to maintain. This was almost double the amount spent on the civil, judicial and ecclesiastical establishments of the colony at the time.<sup>32</sup>

The British authorities in Grenada, in order to prevent the recurrence of a revolt on the scale of the one Fedon led, exterminated the majority of the adult slave population. That majority had, of course, been involved in the insurgency, but mostly as non-combatants. But, the slave owners and their protectors felt that re-enslaved labor would hardly be the most effective kind for reconstructing their devastated estates. So, having removed that ungovernable labor force from the scene by genocide, they hoped to replace it with freshly imported adult slaves. Those authorities also, as part of this program of recolonization and reenslavement, implemented a policy of physically eliminating the most advanced elements in the Free Coloured and Free Black population. The majority of that group had taken an active part in the revolt, and those who were not killed fighting, were

captured and executed, while others—men, women and children—were condemned to transportation and banishment, a fate that was in most instances worse than death. The considerable property and economic holding of that group was then confiscated. The new group of Free Coloured and Blacks that replaced them was one bereft of the solid economic base that Fedon, DuBisset, Allard, St. Bernard, de Valie, Nogues, De Suze Cadet, La Vallette, the Chevalier de Suze, Besson, Josey, and others of that distinguished brood had possessed. They were, that brood, like medieval barons defying the central authorities from their large and almost self-contained estates, and uniting with the serfs to whom they were related by blood to do this. Fedon could use his Belvedere estate as a headquarters from which he could mobilize the majority of Grenadians to defy the might of imperial Britain and hold out for fifteen months. The British saw to it that Free Coloureds and Free Blacks would never again, under their rule, control the kind of economic power base that Fedon and his group had done. That nascent petit bourgeois of Free Coloureds and Blacks taking the place of Fedon and his French creoles was going to be tied to the British colonial system through jobs in the civil service, in the local business world or junior employees of foreign-owned companies and in other lower echelon categories of jobs, and later they would enter the professions like teaching, the police force, medicine, law and religion. So separated from an independent economic power base that emerging petit bourgeois class would be much easier to indoctrinate, manipulate and control.

The reasons why the French had abandoned Fedon and those heroic volunteers from the French Antilles who had fought with him are still to be unearthed. The cockades, banners and guns which Nogues and La Vallette had brought back with them from Guadeloupe early in 1795 proved woefully inadequate. When the Fedon insurgents were virtually in control of the greater part of Grenada at the beginning of 1796, one shipment of arms could have saved the day. How many of those two hundred Antillean volunteers survived no one knows. But to this day the most powerful of navies cannot prevent Grenadians from using the surrounding Caribbean Sea to slip in and out of their island. So apart from those volunteers who were killed in action, captured, executed and transported with the 86 adult Free Coloureds to Santo Domingo, others might well have escaped.

The British had in any event been looking with covetous eyes at the

French-owned estates since they had taken over Grenada from the French in 1663. The revolt provided them with the excuse they had been looking for. The white planters had also been unhappy about men whom they considered to be racially inferior, enjoying the same wealth and status that they did.

But while Fedon had been rocking one of the central pillars of what he had described as the edifice of slavery, other pillars were being eroded by a declining sugar industry. That tottering industry's enemies were not only rebellious slaves. Sugar production in the British West Indies had become expensive, inefficient and hence uneconomical, and powerful capitalist interests that had created the West Indian sugar industry and its deformed but profitable stepchild—the Atlantic Slave Trade—began to actively conspire to destroy the monster they had shaped and nurtured for centuries. The Manchester Chamber of Commerce, inspired by a lust for profits from other sugar-producing sources, began to sound like radical abolitionists when on May 4th, 1821, it presented,

A petition to the House of Commons deprecating  
a preference to one colony over another and  
in particular, a preference to a settlement of slaves  
over a nation of free men.<sup>33</sup>

The skilful hand of the East India Lobby was obviously behind those ostensibly noble sentiments. In Sheffield,

The people boycotted West Indian sugar and  
urged the consumption of East Indian instead . . .  
In 1833 the anti-slavery society there passed  
a motion for immediate and total emancipation  
instead of a gradual freedom.<sup>34</sup>

And as the momentum of this resistance to saving the faltering British West Indian sugar industry increased, in 1820,

The City of Glasgow's Chamber of Commerce  
joined the forces baying at the heels of the West  
Indian Sugar Lobby, demanding an end to  
restrictions on Free Trade, and complaining that

the West Indian monopoly was unprofitable and that it was costing the British Public £1½ million (per annum) to support it.<sup>35</sup>

Fedon had removed the bulk of the labor force from the Grenadian sugar industry and destroyed a great deal of its physical plant at a time when it could least afford it. The draconic reprisals against the whole slave population turned out to be counter-productive. The Grenadian plantocracy found itself caught up in a dilemma of its own creation. A slave society needed a regular supply of slaves to replace the ones who had either been worked to death or had been relegated to a scrap heap after the best working years of their lives had been used up. In addition to the routine attrition, the plantocracy had inadvertently presided over the extermination of a highly prized economic asset—the majority of its most highly skilled and able-bodied slaves. This had been done when their devastated plantation economy had to be reconstructed and bankers, traders, investors and manufacturers in England reassured that Grenada was once more “tranquil”. (That was a word that planters often used to placate nervous speculators abroad).

Some of the Grenadian planters cut their losses and emigrated with their slaves; others found themselves too entangled in a web of debt, and they were forced to stay where they were. But they all needed loans, long term credits and subsidies to survive. They also needed a labor force to replace the one the military had eliminated; and they needed it at a time when the abolition of the slave trade was imminent, their collateral was daily diminishing in value and the metropolitan market forces were working against them.

Since the revolt had been launched at Marquis in March, 1795, many rainy and dry seasons had come and gone, and weeds and bush were reclaiming the neglected arable land on over a hundred estates. By the 1820's, those and other estates were still feeling the pinch of acute shortages of capital and technical resources to complete the rehabilitation process. If they (the plantocrats) had had the surplus funds that their ancestors were in possession of a few generations earlier they could have seized the opportunity to create new and more efficient sugar manufacturing, and cocoa and coffee growing processes, but they had neither the financial resources, nor the vision to do this. They concentrated instead on converting estates that had once pro-

duced enormous profits from sugar, coffee, cocoa, cotton, tobacco, indigo and other export crops into human breeding farms. In 1826, the Agricultural Societies' Annual Ploughing Match was held at Paradise Estate. At this gala for the planters and their friends and associates, amidst much ribaldry at the expense of black women, the consumption of food and drink, the dancing of quadrilles and other entertainment, we are told that,

Jane Clair, a slave . . . on Thuilleries Estate won the first prize of £4.10 shillings (for having given birth to more children under twelve years old than any other slave mother. Sylvia, from Mount Horne Estate won the second prize of £3.6 shillings and Derone from Grand Bras, third prize of £2.6 shillings.<sup>36</sup>

Those debased and grotesquely insensitive festivities were the comic side-shows of slavery playing out its final act.

The attempts by slave owners to mitigate the savageries of slavery were merely a confession of how untenable the system, that Fedon and his immortal insurgents had fought against, had really become. In 1823, Lord Bathurst instructed the legislatures in the British West Indies to enact laws to ameliorate the working and living conditions of slaves. These Grenadian slaves, more ruthlessly suppressed than ever since the Fedon revolt, but still undaunted, plus the permanent dethronement of British West Indian sugar and its banishment to inconsequential outposts in the capitalist Kingdom of Chance, combined to make even the most stubbornly myopic of the Grenadian planters see the writing on the wall. In 1825, the Legislature passed an act consolidating all laws relating to the slave population. This act was revealing: the 18th century edict expressly forbidding slaves to be instructed in the principles of the Christian faith, was removed from the statue books. Slaves could thenceforth be baptized and receive religious instruction. The slaves had, very shrewdly, seized upon the Christian faith and were using it like a battering ram to assault the inner sanctums of slavery. The other clauses of that act made a mockery of the claim that Africans and Indians were "civilized" through slavery and colonialism, or that slavery itself was a humane and benign institution. They stated that,

The workday was to start at 5 a.m. and end at 7 p.m. with a half-an-hour for breakfast and two hours from 12 midday to 2. p.m. for lunch time. It was illegal for masters to discharge old slaves on account of sickness or to allow them to wander about from want of sustenance. This carried a fine of £50. All punishment exceeding 15 lashes was to be administered in the presence of a free person and not more than 25 lashes were to be given on any one day. Violation of this law carried a penalty of £10. Female slaves with five or more children had to be given 52 days in a year to cultivate their own grounds. Children could no longer be separated from their parents nor was it permissible to separate married slaves.<sup>37</sup>

If those were the improvements, then the state of affairs of slaves must have been abysmal. What generosity towards those "lazy" Blacks! Their work day was going to be reduced to fourteen hours by law! The claim that slaves were often forced to work an eighteen hour day is substantiated by that 'beneficent' 1825 Act. It was the year in which Napoleon was finally defeated and sent into exile. But the British blockade had forced the resourceful self-appointed Emperor to develop the European sugar beet industry and thus to drive another nail into the coffin of West Indian sugar. The corpse of that once unbelievably profitable industry would be laid to rest in the 1880's. But, the rest would be an uneasy one, for the industry would continue to be revived on a small scale in fits and starts. Ironically, it was exhumed and brought back to life and vigour briefly by the Peoples Revolutionary Government of Maurice Bishop. And that attempt, for the first time since European colonization began, gave control of the industry to cooperatives and small farmers.

After a struggle begun in 1650, when first slaves from Africa were brought forcibly to Grenada, the Grenadian Emancipation Act was passed on the 11th of March, 1834. It was described in the Council as,

An Act for carrying into effect the provisions of an act of the Imperial Parliament of Great Britain for the abolition of slavery.<sup>38</sup>

When passed into law, this Act had provisions attached to it to codify the social and economic relations of apprentices and planters in Grenada for the next four years. Apprenticeship was a thinly disguised ploy for continuing slavery under a different guise. But the slaves chose to take the Emancipation Act at face value, and to resist the three-quarters slave and one-quarter free status that being an apprentice, in fact, meant. That Act, ostensibly, gave the status of British subjects to 25,000 Grenadians at the stroke of a quill, but the vast majority of those subjects of the Empire would remain disenfranchised for another 116 years. Between 1834 and 1877, the Council, which legislated all local matters, was elected by such a restricted franchise that elections were a charade, and the meetings of the Council, a comic opera and a forum where planters could quarrel among themselves over trivia. In 1853, a member was elected by the vote of a single elector, and by casting his own vote, he took his seat in the Council with a 100 percent majority. In the "elections" for the Council, one percent of the adult population was eligible to vote.

But, it would be well to look at some interesting events that took place immediately before emancipation, since they had so much of a direct and indirect bearing on the struggle between a small elite of planters, businessmen, clergy and colonial officials and the majority of Grenadians right up to 1979.

Despite the fact that power of the Free Coloureds and Free Blacks had been curtailed after the Fedon revolt, this nascent petit bourgeois group was close to fifteen percent of the population by 1830<sup>39</sup>, and its more advanced elements were actively agitating for more human, civil and political rights than the planters were willing to grant them. A tactic that the Free Coloureds and Free Blacks used, and one about which the culturally backward and underdeveloped planters were particularly sensitive, was to send their petitions directly to the King, the Colonial Office or to sympathetic members of the House of Commons, or the House of Lords. This was mostly because, for centuries, the colonized harboured the illusion that the distant rulers at the top in Britain would be more compassionate and understanding than minions in the colonies. And this belief was actively encouraged by the colonizers. But, there was occasionally a crack in the edifice of colonial dictatorships through which those agitating for better conditions could slip their petitions. In a letter sent to the Colonial Office in 1830, the Free Coloureds and Free Blacks complained,

- 1) That the man of colour is most cruelly and unjustly held forth as an inferior being stigmatized and degraded by the local law and customs.
- 2) That they were excluded from all civil rank and honour, these being opened to whites alone, many of whom had no personal merit.
- 3) That civil magistrates were exclusively whites.
- 4) That the legislature was entirely confined to whites.

In a letter sent to the House of Commons in the same year, they continued to voice their grievances. They complained that although they possessed two-thirds of the property in the town . . . formed the greatest percentage of the free population, that although their numbers filled the ranks . . . of the militia, their class was consigned to an inferior position; that they held no ranks in the militia . . . that they were not allowed to have representatives in the legislature although the most uneducated whites have lately been gaining seats on the Assembly.<sup>40</sup>

But it was only after Frances Danglade, that courageous Free Coloured woman took to the streets and in defiance of a magistrate, led a demonstration to protest those inequities, that the colonial authority bestirred itself.<sup>41</sup> The Secretary of State heard about the demonstration and of Danglade's imprisonment, and rapped the local Legislature on the knuckles. One year later, in 1832, Free Blacks and Free Coloureds were allowed to give evidence in all cases, to elect their own representatives to the Assembly, and to be Grand Jury members.<sup>42</sup>

## PART THREE

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# The Post-Emancipation Struggle

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

In 1833, the year before the Emancipation Act was passed, the Grenadian plantocracy was using their slaves as bargaining chips to extract as much compensation as they could from the British Government. Thirty-seven years after the Fedon revolt, a cabal of slave owners still ruled Grenada, among them were,

George Gun-Munroe, who held the post of Assistant Judge owned 3,317 slaves; Owsley Rowley, Colonial Secretary and member of the Assembly owned 1000; George Patterson, President and His Majesty's Council owned 314; the Reverend W. Sealey, Rector of St. John's and St. Mark's, owned 4; Reverend M. Nash, Rector of Carriacou, owned 3; and Reverend Francis McMahon, Rector of St. George's, owned 15.<sup>1</sup>

It was the same McMahon, whose life Fedon had spared, and who had warned Fedon about the low cunning of the English. He himself seemed to epitomize the very qualities that he had spoken of with such urbane cynicism. Once he had been freed, he very calmly helped the authorities to identify all of the captured Fedon Lieutenants and followers he had seen in the Camp of Liberty; and with perfect equanimity, this man of cloth had watched them as they were being led away to be hanged, burnt alive, tortured or transported. He also seemed to have back-slid into becoming a slave-owner once more with the greatest ease.

Stung by the eloquent and persistent denunciations of the abolitionists, reeling from the economic blows that were crippling the sugar industry and having to deal with restive slaves and increasingly articulate and militant Free Blacks and Coloureds, a congress of slave owners met in Barbados. It was called a congress of all West Indian Assemblies. Grenada's representatives to this February 1831 conclave of backwoodsmen, were Robert Stronach and John Hoyes,

The other representatives were from Barbados, Antigua, St. Kitts, Nevis, Virgin Islands, Dominica, Demerara and Essequibo, Tobago and St. Vincent. A committee was appointed to draw up a memorandum to be sent to the British Government. John Hoyes became chairman of that committee.<sup>2</sup>

The final text sounded like a document from another age, and yet it gives one interesting insights into the obfuscated minds of those plantocrats. There are complaints about war duties still being in existence 15 years after the war. If they were talking about the Napoleonic wars, then they must have got their dates mixed up, because those had ended in 1825; and they protested about advantage being "given to foreign cultivators of sugar by their continuation of the slave trade."<sup>3</sup> The Spanish in Cuba, and the Portuguese in Brazil, both formidable rivals of the West Indian sugar barons, were continuing their slave trade, but they were also producing sugar more efficiently and cheaply, and English merchants were simply buying the best sugar at the lowest price undeterred by any sentimental attachment to their traditional West Indian suppliers.

Britain did not become the owner of a far-flung empire and a world center of Capitalism, by being nostalgic and feeling compelled to purchase expensive commodities from their overseas kith and kin when there were better bargains elsewhere. The rest of the memorandum is predictably, full of venom for the anti-slave society, and states that,

The consequences of the slave trade are not now to be charged against the character of the West Indian colonists whose principal share in the transaction has been that of civilizing and bringing to order and to comparative comfort persons brought into the colonies in a state of barbarism.<sup>4</sup>

Here is the splendid John Hoyes, owner of 220 slaves, making excuses for his greed and inhumanity; and using discredited and specious arguments that the anti-slave movement had already torn to shreds. No self-respecting person, even if he still believed in those fic-

tions, would have ventured to voice them in any reasonably intelligent company in London at that time, but in the cultural backwater of Barbadian slave society that was normal conversation. The "civilizing mission" theory is a curious one. How could one have civilized another human being, using whips and manacles, driving him to work an eighteen-hour day and making it punishable by death to learn to read and write. But some home truths were disseminated during this congress of effigies from the past. For later, in the midst of some blustering about possible secession from Britain, a certain Mr. Ross, at a public meeting in Grenada had declared that his island had contributed significantly to Britain's wealth and power, and was now being abandoned.

But despite the obscurantist fulminations of the planters, slavery, which had outlived its usefulness as a profit-making venture, was abolished. And the planters, and not their victims, the slaves, were compensated.

Brizan states that,

In addition to the £ 616,255 compensation in cash, Grenadian planters received compensation in the form of free labour. When quantified, this amounted to the sum of £ 995,000. The average daily wage at the time was four pence to one shilling; The number of apprentices who gave free labour were 19,900 and they worked . . . five days a week for fifty-two weeks . . . for four years . . .<sup>5</sup>

The apprenticeship system, which was meant to bridge the gap between slavery and freedom, was unworkable from the start because the Grenadian slaves had tasted freedom twice in forty years; once during the Fedon revolt, and the second time when the Emancipation Act was passed. The latter was not meant to free them immediately, but they deliberately interpreted it that way. All the pious nostrums about the virtues of hard work contained in the apprenticeship regulations fell on deaf ears. Those idle Grenadian planters could well have been told in a paraphrase of what Lincoln had advised a group of passionate advocates of slavery, if apprenticeship was such a noble and uplifting state of being, why weren't they apprentices themselves.

There was no sudden flight from the land after the yoke of the apprenticeship system had been thrown down, but many freed men abandoned the estates with their memories of forced labour and the whip, to work in trades as fishermen, carpenters, masons, blacksmiths and wheelwrights. Others, mostly women, became hucksters, house servants, washer-women and seamstresses.

In Grenada, to paraphrase Eric Williams, the discipline of whips and chains during slavery were replaced after Emancipation with the discipline of starvation. After the decline of the sugar industry, the colonial economy seemed to be suspended in a permanent state of stasis. But, at the center of the superstructure of stasis was a living entity. For, the people, patient, indomitable, and always striving for a better life for themselves and their children, had infused it with their dreams, their creative labor, and their distinctive culture that had sunk deep roots in the Grenadian soil. Those carpenters, masons, wheelwrights, coopers, blacksmiths, boatbuilders, mechanics, and pan-boilers had brought their skills with them out of slavery, and as freedmen, they set about establishing an innovative artisan tradition of using simple materials to imitate manufactured goods that rural workers could not afford to buy. This tradition has survived in backward rural communities right up to the present. When the waves of indentured labourers came, they added a new range of skills to that creative artisan pool through silver-and goldsmiths, wood carvers, workers with wood and metal, and those engaged in a wide range of crafts.

These artisans along with Free Blacks and Coloureds formed a core around which villages would begin to spring up all over Grenada. In those villages were also ex-slaves who owned small freeholds or who rented or leased plots of land from estates near to where they lived. It was the policy of the planters to try and induce workers to continue living in their old slave cottages and growing provisions on the minuscule plots they were allowed to use. The cottage, the plot of land and the habit of living in a familiar environment were used as mechanisms of control. The threat of eviction was often enough to make the head of a household think twice about demanding an increase in his 4 to 7 pence daily wage. But the estates owners did not by any means have it all their way. In 1839, reports by stipendary magistrates estimated that not more than 20 percent of all labourers worked for their employers at any one time;<sup>6</sup> and in St. David's parish,

not more than twelve to fourteen people could be procured to cut canes in one area where the population was about 800; the result in stoppages at the mills and boiling houses and the loss of time to carters and mule boys was considerable.<sup>7</sup>

The planters were, therefore, compelled to bargain with free itinerant labor, and the worker, on the other hand, had the freedom to live where he chose. That worker then chose a social unit of his own creation—the village. From the very beginning, therefore, the villages grew up in opposition to the large estates,

By 1852 there were some 7,127 persons living in free villages in Grenada; this accounted for 22% of the population. Out of 685 labourers in St. John's and St. Mark's in 1850, 413 owned freehold or rented plots, 116 were metayers (sharecroppers) and 156 were tenants at will.<sup>8</sup>

It is interesting to note that in 1870, St. Andrew's, the parish with the longest continuous history of resistance to slavery in Grenada, had the highest number of people living in villages. It was from the mountains of this parish that Seka and his Maroons had come down to join the Fedon insurgents, to fight side by side with Fedon up to the end, and then to retreat to their sanctuaries once more. They continued to harass the slave system right up to the day the Emancipation Act was passed; and afterwards, coming down from their mountain fastnesses, they settled in village communities where their culture of resistance could spread itself into a broader matrix and their resistance to colonial rule could take new forms. The parish of St. Patrick's was next, 3,350 villagers were living there in 1870; and this parish had become a pivotal center of resistance two decades earlier. The agricultural workers in St. Patrick's organized a parish-wide strike against an attempt by the proprietors to reduce wages that were already at a starvation level. And, as if to validate their reasons for going on strike, six years later, as a result of the criminal negligence of the colonial authorities in making the most rudimentary health facilities available to the Grenadian population as a whole, one-eighth of that population perished in a cholera epidemic between June and September of 1854.

W. E. B. Du Bois had described the village as an ancient African social unit that first came into being on that vast continent during the dawn of history. So the Africans who came to Grenada brought with them primordial memories, and once they had won their centuries-old battle against slavery, those memories could unconsciously impregnate and shape new cultural forms. But there was also the fact that African immigrants (and they added their contribution at the conscious level) did not stop arriving in Grenada until 1865. The Grenadian village, however, is a peculiarly Grenadian hybrid. Its African flavour, though, is unmistakable, particularly in those villages that were more isolated from the mainstream than others. In Carriacou, where the slaves had virtually freed themselves before the Emancipation Act was passed, the African influences are less diluted, and that smaller island's isolation gave its people a breathing spell during which they could weave various cultural strands into a unique Afro-Grenadian fabric.

For a hundred years, the wages of Grenadian agricultural workers remained at around one shilling per day, and in 1930 a small clique of landowners (4.5 percent), still owned 72 percent of the best arable lands. In the post-Emancipation era, the rural workers who made up the majority of Grenada's work force tried every possible expedient to avoid the kind of absolute control over their lives that the planters had imposed during slavery. In the 1853 Blue Book, Governor Keate wrote,

The Planter must be well aware that every negro to whom he is paying wages has at heart a longing and determination sooner or later to possess a piece of land of his own or at all event to hire and occupy one which he can cultivate in his own way and at his own convenience and not at his employer's dictation.<sup>9</sup>

Having made this perceptive statement, Keate, then slyly suggests that the metayage (sharecropping) system was a good one for an agricultural worker evolving from wage labor to land ownership. But why the transition phase? One might well have asked. Were the planters sharecroppers before they took over their large estates?

The reason why Grenadian agricultural labourers and sharecrop-

pers wanted to own land was because they regarded ten acres as the equivalent of a safe job in the civil service. It would enable them to feed themselves and their family, have a decent income, send their children to school, afford to pay doctor's and dentist's bills and win the respect of the community. Metayage (share cropping), however, was a trap from which the cultivator seldom escaped. It was more like a treadmill than a rung on the ladder of social and economic mobility.

In 1848, the workers on estates in St. Patrick's went on strike. The Proprietors tried to reduce their already meagre wages from ten pence to one shilling per day to a flat eight pence. They were also threatened that if they didn't agree to accept the wage reduction they would be evicted from their estate cottages and lose their provision grounds. Lieutenant Governor Hamilton sent a circular around instructing the workers to accept the cut in their wages. When the magistrates read the contents of the circular to them, they refused to believe that the Governor had written it, and stormed the court house, pushing the constables on duty aside. When reinforcements arrived, they broke up into small groups and left threatening to return on the following day with 2000 supporters. Fifty soldiers arrived on the scene on December 12, and on the following day, the Governor met with the strike leaders, and along with the local Catholic priest, persuaded them to accept the terms of the Proprietors.

| By January 17th 1848 many of them had returned  
| to work but there were some who remained  
| dissatisfied and adamant not to return to work.<sup>10</sup>

This 1848 uprising was the precursor of the 1951 revolt. Right up to the 1930 s, the wages of agricultural workers had remained frozen at one shilling per day.

The British Colonial policy in Grenada was consistently one that aimed at maintaining pools of docile and cheap labor for the benefit of a small white or near-white plantocracy. In order to implement that policy effectively, they had, particularly after the Fedon revolt, to retain an expensive hierarchy of repression—police, courts, jails, regular soldiers and militia—they also had to design and implement educational programs that would tranquilize the mind rather than encourage it to think for itself. Finally, through the use of their repressive

State apparatus, they had to ensure that the majority of the population, which was black and working-class, remained disenfranchised. Whippings, hard labor and the gallows were as much a part of the British colonial system in Grenada as the holiday festivities for the King's Birthday or for Empire Day, when school children gathered to wave paper Union Jacks and to sing songs of praise to their oppressors. The hangman, a salaried civil servant, received a bonus for every victim he dispatched, and in colonial societies he became a kind of grisly folk hero, a symbol of terror lurking somewhere on the dark under-side of the system. But centuries of resistance had given the former slaves a profound understanding of the weak spots in the armour of the oligarchs. They very often made their demands for higher wages and better working conditions at harvest-time. If the planters summoned constables and militia to shoot them down at this crucial time, they would still lose their valuable crops and face ruin. Those planters retaliated by bringing in indentured labor. But this was not unlike covering sores with a plaster, when the disease was really in the bloodstream.

There was no shortage of labor in Grenada during the 1846-1885 period when indentured immigration began and ended. The sugar industry was already on a roller-coaster to oblivion, and the cocoa and coffee industries were not labor-intensive ones. Lieutenant Governor Robert Keate, in a circular letter to Governor Colebrooke of the Windward Islands, dated March 16th, 1854, had written:

The cocoa and coffee estates throughout the island are managed almost without exception upon the metairie system and with success.<sup>11</sup>

Brizan, observed that,

In the post-1838 period and as late as 1854, the Grenadian planters, like their Jamaican counterparts, raised cries of ruin and impending disaster when they realized that ex-slaves were now in a position to bargain over their terms of employment . . . They almost invariably blamed the woes of the sugar industry on a deficient labour supply . . .<sup>12</sup>

They were simply being nostalgic for slave labor, and wanted a cheaper but at the same time as close an approximation to it as they could get away with. Indentured labor, however, merely compounded their problems. Brizan listed those problems as,

- 1) A shortage of capital . . . and the slowness to modernize technology.
- 2) Antiquated methods of production, estate management and organization.
- 3) Inability to compete internationally.
- 4) Low and constantly fluctuating prices on the world market.
- 5) Estate indebtedness.<sup>13</sup>

A spokesman for the metropolitan missionary organizations (those organizations with the help and approval of the Colonial Office, were given the task of educating the newly emancipated and ensuring that they grew up to be docile colonials) had declared that Blacks (alas) suffered "under the combined influences of their barbarian origin."<sup>14</sup> This anonymous racist was one of those behind-God's-back missionaries who brought to his "civilizing mission" an excess of bigotry and stupidity and a paucity of intelligence and imagination. But John Smith, the Guiana martyr was hanged for having an abundance of the latter qualities plus more than his fair share of integrity.

The West Indian planter also came in for his share of venomous barbs from his own metropolitan kith and kin. To the fops and dilettantes in the fashionable salons of London and Paris planters were regarded as being "oafish, crude, immoral and unlettered."<sup>15</sup> James Stephen declared in 1837 that he could think of no class more lacking in morals and more depraved than the West Indian planter class.

Much to their chagrin, those planters discovered that they were bling creolized and hence alienated from the metropolitan culture: that the oleous airs of Africa and the vital Afro-Grenadian culture were dissolving the rigidities of a transplanted and sterile Euro-Grenadian one. The accusation that they were "depraved" was usually levelled at them because of the ease with which they seemed to mix

with black and mulatto women, their preference for creole cuisine, the lilt and rhythm of their West Indianized speech and the way in which their features and complexions often reflected unmistakable touches of the "tar brush", (a self-deprecating creole term for Negro blood).

The system of indentured labor which introduced much larger immigrant populations to colonies like Trinidad, Guyana and Surinam from India, China, Java and Madeira, tends to make one overlook the fact that the majority of those contract labourers brought to the Windward and Leeward islands (53.9 %) came from Africa. In Grenada, roughly the same number of African indentured workers were imported as East Indians. Between 1834 and 1865, 3,052 African immigrant workers entered the Grenadian labor force; and between 1856 and 1885, 3,205 East Indians did. In addition, 164 Maltese immigrants arrived in 1839 on the ship "English Naprin", and between 1846 and 1850, 589 Portuguese immigrants from Madeira were thrown into the Grenadian racial melting pot.<sup>16</sup>

There were, therefore, Grenadians who still spoke African languages at the beginning of the twentieth Century. The new infusions of culture, language and life-styles that those African indentured labourers brought would certainly have played a significant role in shaping the modern Grenadian culture. In the 1880's, around half of the black population in Cuba had been born in Africa; and this gave new infusions of vitality to the Afro-Cuban culture. In Grenada, it would have been around one-eighth of their adult population, apart from the creolized black majority, and its effect on the Afro-Grenadian culture would have been equally profound.

The British West Indian plantocrat, was, as a group, so lacking in distinction, and as human beings, so bereft of redeeming features, that as one thumbs through the records, the only thing that one can really praise them for is their promiscuity. With very few exceptions, their darker skinned offspring seemed to have had more than their fair share of the talents, the creative energy, the passion to excell and the imagination that they lacked. This was not a eugenic issue, rather, it was one in which those with a long history of deprivation were compelled to strive harder. Perhaps the house slaves, who after Emancipation had continued to pamper them, extracted a cunning revenge and put a blight on them.

## CHAPTER TWELVE

The indentured system in Grenada was a brutal and heartless one. That new labor force was thrown into a pool that had already been muddied by centuries of exploitation. The apprenticeship laws, which the fierce resistance of recently emancipated slaves had rendered unworkable, were resurrected by the planters and imposed upon their indentured workers. One can say about the immigrant worker, precisely what had been said about the apprentice, that he laboured under the same incapacity, the whip following him at every step, hard labour at every turn. Some of the clauses of the indentured labourer's contract read exactly like the old slave laws.

Breaking contracts, wilful disobedience, insolence were all punishable either by forfeiture of wages or by a term of imprisonment not exceeding 30 days.<sup>1</sup>

There was also that old planter-obsession with arson,

Where an indenture endangered property by careless use of fire, cruelly used cattle or through negligence caused damage to cattle, he was to be fined four pounds and imprisoned for not more than 30 days.<sup>2</sup>

The sickness and mortality rates among the Indian immigrants assigned to various estates was in the vicinity of 25 percent. The health and sanitary conditions under which they lived were appalling. In the midst of the monumental hardships that they faced, they performed an extraordinary act of adjustment to a new society, resisted the tyrannical rules under which they were forced to work, and in the end, by thrift discipline and solidarity with other Indians whereby the

haves helped the havenots, they were able to take over some of the defunct estates that bankrupt planters had simply abandoned and eventually, to move into commerce and the professions. A small percentage of those immigrants returned to India (320 between 1866 and 1895)<sup>3</sup> but the majority remained, some migrating to the other islands, particularly to Trinidad, and others to the Guianas.

To trace the patterns of resistance by Indian immigrants, one has to look at some of the official accounts,

The 243 Indian males and 95 females who were indentured in 1882 (and that was a time when conditions had improved considerably) worked 44,145 and 11,485 days respectively, the absentee rate was approximately 21,000 days . . . the causes varied from sickness, to acts of vagrancy and refusal to work. On an average the males worked 3 1/2 days and the females 2 1/4 days per week. Of the 30 indentures brought to trial in 1882 three were for desertion, seven for refusal to work, seven for absence without leave and two for refusing to finish work.<sup>4</sup>

One must, of course, bear in mind that those migrants were employed in seasonal agricultural work, and there would have been months of the year when they worked on their own garden plots. They were also permitted to raise their own livestock, and had access to some fruit and vegetables belonging to the planter.

J. P. Denham, the Protector of Immigrants, observed that,

By December 1877 some 2,000 Indians had been imported yet at that date there were a mere 112 located on estates . . . the conditions on the estates were so deplorable that Indians abandoned them at the earliest opportunity. Many migrated to Trinidad, some set up settlements in different parts of the island, and others returned to India. Denham himself described the treatment they received as iniquitous, kicked off as soon as they became ill and were allowed to die of yaws and

other diseases on the roads . . . The lot of Indians on Beausejour Estate was so deplorable, he added, that he had to transfer them to other estates. The indentured Indians there were all laid up with fever for over a month; the manager refused to supply them with the necessary maintenance as provided under the Immigration Act, instead he beat them like draught animals in order to get them to work. One Indian died and another had to be removed to the Colony Hospital. The manager was charged ten shillings . . .<sup>5</sup>

How predictable those racists are through the centuries! In 1858, a certain Dr. Horsford, a Grenadian planter, declared that "Coolie immigrants, in their barbaric ignorance, will become nuisances to the community by fostering heathenism in our midst and by their innate tendency to crime."<sup>6</sup>

Without the earlier Black resistance, the Indian lot would have been ten times harder. In those early days there was little contact between the two peoples. Indentures were insulated from the rest of the population. The planters felt that the Blacks might spread a contagion of truths to the newcomers and that the two—Indians and Blacks—might unite against them. Very little is said about the African indentures, except that there is some mention of the fact, almost in disgust, that their integration into the rest of the population took place smoothly. But as distinct from countries like Trinidad and Guyana, there was little or no racial friction between Indians and Afro-Grenadians. For a long time, they kept their distance and their separate identities without the one race feeling threatened by the other. Perhaps the leaven of that equal number of African indentures helped. In Surinam, the Javanese, who are around 12 percent of the population, also acted as a leaven between the larger Afro-Surinamese and Indo-Surinamese groups. But the Grenadians, on the whole, have right up to the present time, apart from a stubborn racist minority, established an enviable tradition of racial tolerance. A group of white peasants, introduced from Europa in the late 19th century, were able to blend with their black and brown counterparts in a way that it would be impossible to find anywhere in the United States. They

were called "Mung-Mungs" a creole term without any pejorative meaning attached to it.

Contrary to those doctrines of pan-misegenation that some liberals preach with such fervor, the mixing of races does not by itself solve problems of economic exploitation; the oppression of one class by another does not disappear on a nuptial couch; only when fundamental changes in the structure of colonial and neo-colonial societies take place does a genuine racial harmony become possible. Racism, which was widespread in Cuba, despite centuries of misegenation, was dealt a death-blow by the Revolution when the prerogative of a small ruling class to exploit the majority was eliminated for all time, and all power was in the hands of the people. The Caribbean archipelago is the ultimate in racial melting pots. All the races on this planet have mingled their blood there, in a swirling crucible of peoples. It is a rainbow arch of islands and a rainbow coalition of races and peoples, but that region's problems of imperialist exploitation and its bedfellow, racism, apart from liberated Cuba, are still being fought daily by the great majority of its polyglot people.

The 1848 strike of agricultural workers in St. Patrick's was the fore-runner of an island-wide strike in 1951. The St. Patrick's workers had confronted a triumvirate of Church, State and planters. One hundred and three years later, the only changes were that the descendants of those workers were more numerous, and the oligarchy of repression facing them included a more developed local business sector. In 1848, the Governor sent fifty soldiers to restore order, while in 1951, another British Governor had to call for gun-boats, police and Royal Marines.

At the beginning of that grim 103-year-long interlude, a cholera epidemic, sweeping through the Caribbean, struck Grenada and left an appalling trail of death in its wake. That epidemic, reminiscent of a medieval plague, provided a yard stick for measuring the extent of the poverty and neglect that colonial citizens faced in the British West Indies and indifference to the well-being of the black and brown majority by the same triumvirate that the St. Patrick workers had confronted—the Church, the Colonial State apparatus and the planters.<sup>7</sup>

Cholera, which incubates itself best in the world's worst slums, first savaged Jamaica between 1850 and 1851.<sup>8</sup> It moved north to the Bahamas and then, soon afterwards, almost capriciously, it sneaked down the stepping-stones of the Leeward and Windward islands. The

epidemic underlined the fact that compensation had been given to the wrong class after slavery. It was the former slaves who had been denied the right to earn wages for centuries who needed to be given the means of starting a new life, and not the planters who had benefitted so richly from that slave labor. The death toll from cholera in Jamaica was 32,000, in Barbados, 20,000, in Trinidad 4,000 and in Grenada one in every twelve people died.<sup>9</sup> In St. Patrick's, the parish where the whole working population had risen up to demand better living and working conditions six years earlier, 25 % of the population died. That medieval visitation, cholera, graced the British West Indies during the time that an international depression had gripped the metropolitan countries. Engels had identified the phenomena of slumps manifesting themselves from 1825 onwards, he noted that capitalist production was thrown out of gear about once every ten years when markets became glutted. In Grenada, the plague became known as "Fedon's revenge." It struck first at the Royal Artillery Regiment in Fort George, spread to the 69th Regiment which had recently arrived from Trinidad, and then it went on rampage among the rest of the island's population. The Governor predictably blamed the victims. He seemed to have believed in the old Nigerian proverb that the dead are always guilty. He ignored the fact that there was one doctor for the whole parish of St. George's who attended mostly to the rich; and in the rest of Grenada, in Carriacou and Petit Martinique, there were two others. Besides, the budget for public health for the whole of Grenada was less than what a planter spent on the entertainment of his friends. Governor Keate had written in his report that "they (the negro peasantry) appeared to prefer death either by disease or starvation to the outlay of a single shilling of their hoarded treasure."<sup>10</sup> There could hardly have been much "treasure" to "hoard" on wages of seven pence per day! The ranks of those mercenaries who had inherited the scavenger role of the Loyal Black Rangers were decimated. "Fedon's revenge" seemed to have fallen upon them with a particularly heavy hand. Once the disease was abroad and ravaging the countryside, the planters and their overseers fled from the estates. Some workers also fled but "the remainder had huddled themselves together in their huts with every breath of air carefully excluded, awaiting death with apathy and despair."<sup>11</sup> In those stinking cruel huts, the living and the dead lay side by side. It was reminiscent of the slave ships and the barracoons, only on this

occasion the victims were shackled by cholera. The official body counts were really rough estimates. The death toll was much higher. In St. Patrick's, of the 1,720 persons affected by the disease, 1,250 died.<sup>12</sup> Afterwards, speculators roamed the countryside like ghouls to claim the lands of the dead. Fearing for their own lives, the planters, the clergy and the government administrators organized teams to collect the bodies and bury them in mass graves, to burn down huts and the surrounding bush and to keep drains clear since the rains were falling daily. The graves were often too shallow and the stench was overpowering; and, apart from the foul odor, the run-off after the rains polluted drinking water or spread infection into the food chain. Thirty convicts in His Majesty's prison in St. George's, although living in a confined space, were not affected by the epidemic. For the poor, the jail house was the safest place to be.<sup>13</sup> The colonial authorities, inadvertently indicting themselves and the inhuman system over which they presided stated, that the, "cleanliness of the institution and the regular and wholesome diet furnished to its inmates,"<sup>14</sup> were responsible. That, of course, was all relative since the "wholesome diet" included meat condemned by the market inspectors. But the prisoners also ate fresh vegetables, fruit, fish and other sea foods.

Carriacou had escaped the terrors of the epidemic until two sloops arrived from Grenada. A boy who had disembarked from one of the sloops was found on the Harvey Vale Estate with all the symptoms of cholera, the dry and swollen tongue, high temperature, vomiting and an unquenchable thirst. He responded to treatment at first, but after drinking too much water, had a relapse and died. The man attending to him also died. A quarter of Carriacou's population of 4,000 was afflicted and 386 deaths were recorded. Petit Martinique had its share of the epidemic and fared even worse than its sister islands of Grenada and Carriacou. Dr. Maynard, the resident physician in Carriacou, complained that the people were reluctant to submit to treatment by him, they preferred to rely on their own remedies. Their folk remedy, which began with drinking a liquid in which a "bitter bush" had been boiled was reported to have been more effective than the ones the doctors prescribed.<sup>15</sup> The remedies that the trained physicians recommended lead one to believe in the Ivan Illich theory that epidemics will run their course, peter out and die, with or without medical treatment in situations like the Grenadian one.

The "Dr. Stevens' treatment" consisted of large doses of calomel

and opium, quinine and chloroform, while the "Dr. Ayres' ", began with a warm bath, a large blister put on the stomach and liver, and ended with a pill made from 3 grams of calomel, 1/2 gram of Dover powder and a 1/4 gram of camphor.<sup>16</sup> This pill was given to the patient every half hour until the tongue became moist.

Dr. Huggins, a visitor from Trinidad who happened to be in Grenada when the epidemic broke out, and who played a pivotal role in bringing it under control, made the following recommendations to the Board of Health in October 1854. A hundred years later, some of those recommendations had still not been put into effect.

They were:

- 1) Scavenger carts should be employed to convey rubbish and filth to an isolated spot near a neighbouring estate to be made into manure.
- 2) Measures should be adopted to have all rubbish collected in casks or boxes ready to be thrown into the carts and put into the streets on such days as may be decided upon by members of each section of the town.
- 3) Means should be adopted for deoderizing the collection at the refuse dump in order to facilitate its removal to the estate and lands of the settlers.
- 4) Measures should be taken to keep the streets free from grass as it grew in such thick heaps that the flow of water after showers was impeded.
- 5) Vacant lots in the town should be immediately cleared of weeds and the collection removed at once.
- 6) Weekly inspections should be made of the different yards as they were so constructed to ensure that garbage collection accumulation

**Deaths From Cholera (21st June – 15th Sept. 1854) Grenada**

Pop. 1851	District	0–10 yrs		11–40 yrs		40 +		Total		Total
		M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	
4,567	Tw. of St. Geo.	35	24	63	89	56	112	154	275	379
5,413	Par. of St. Geo.	42	33	108	83	78	81	228	197	425
3,116	Par. of St. John	18	17	58	55	35	54	169	178	347
1,738	Par. of St. Mark	13	12	33	31	43	50	89	93	182
5,160	Par. of St. Pat.	136	147	257	219	213	215	606	581	1,250
5,635	Par. of St. And.	19	42	99	106	175	175	293	323	616
2,581	Par. of St. Dav.	6	13	31	33	55	55	92	101	193
4,401	Carriacou	30	5	141	105	52	53	223	163	386
32,671		299	293	790	721	707	795	1,854	1,861	3,778

**Source:** Despatch 98 of 1854: Lieutenant Governor Keate to Gov. Colebrooke; Grenada, "Report upon the appearance and progress of Cholera in Grenada"<sup>18</sup>

took place on levels that are made for the convenience of the tenants.

7) Inspections should be made weekly of the different drains running under the flooring of houses to ensure that they were kept clean and that no water accumulated in them.<sup>17</sup>

In the 58 years between 1796 and 1854, the Grenadian population had experienced cataclysmic social upheavals: the loss of thousands of its citizens and the introduction of immigrant labor from Africa, India, Madeira and Malta. Just as a proliferation of villages was beginning to establish a stable social, cultural and essentially indigenous political foundation for a new society, the cholera epidemic struck.

The resilience which Grenadians showed in dealing with those apocalyptic events was remarkable. Right up to the present time a Grenadian man or woman will introduce himself or herself by stating not only a christian or surname but also the parish, town or village they hail from. A man will say as he shakes your hand. "I am Alban X from Grand Bacolet in St. David's." It is as though because of a long history of upheavals that threatened their very existence, it had become necessary to identify a place in Grenada where every individual had his or her roots.

The immigrant labor which was thrown willy-nilly into the already polyglot population pool was able to adjust more easily because their hosts had already mastered the art of coping with difficult situations and thus could help the newcomers. The East Indian immigrants who came to Grenada and stayed there, became integrated into the society through their wholesale conversion to Presbyterianism and to the easy going Catholicism that pervaded Grenada. This was definitely not the case in Trinidad, Guyana and Surinam where much larger Hindu and Moslem groups had settled. For in those territories they held on to their Hindu or Moslem culture and religion. The Grenadian planters, during that century-long interim, clung doggedly to old habits. They seemed incapable of initiating any kind of innovative changes for the better, and invariably took the line of least resistance. It was the small farmers who had begun growing nutmegs, cloves, cinnamon, and other spices, when every crop that the large planters had

touched, cotton, tobacco, coffee, indigo, cocoa, and sugar, had fallen victim to the unpredictable fluctuations of prices in the world market. If there had been genuinely free competition, those small farmers and the most resourceful peasants would have pushed the decadent estate owners aside and become upwardly mobile Caribbean versions of Lopatkin in Chekhov's "The Cherry Orchard." But, racism, their inability to get any significant credit at the British-owned banks and the use of the colonial state apparatus to "keep them in their place" made this impossible. For every one Caribbean Lopatkin who was let through the different doors to upward mobility, five hundred had those doors slammed in their faces. Unemployment for the whole of that century, from 1851-1951, had hovered around 30 percent. By the 70s, under Gairy, it had risen to 50 percent. It would have been higher, but thousands of the most resourceful Grenadians migrated to Trinidad, to the Dutch-owned ABC islands (Aruba, Bonaire, Curaçao), the French Antilles, Cuba, and later to Britain, the United States, and Canada. During that interim century, one of Grenada's main exports was her emigrants. After those emigrants had settled in their new homes, they sent remittances back home and for half a century, made invaluable contributions to the sagging local economy, thus helping to keep it from collapsing.

## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

At the end of that 103 years, Grenada was still a country of large semi-feudal estates, a weak industrial sector made up mostly of piggy-back industries, a business sector made up of middle-men, and middle-middle-men. Acting as import-export agents or glorified hucksters, these middle-middle men sold textiles and a wide range of baubles that reminded one of the beads, bells and mirrors that the early settlers had offered the Indians in exchange for their lands, their labor, and eventually, for their lives. The greater part of the Grenadian labor force still worked for starvation wages as agricultural workers on those estates. These rigid, antiquated, economic moulds, in which the planters seemed to have imprisoned themselves, made it impossible to modernize the process of agricultural production on their under-utilized lands. Those lands were under-capitalized, large areas remained idle, the crops produced were what the workers described as 'lazy-man' crops, those that were neither capital intensive nor labor intensive, and the small areas under cultivation were run with a grotesque inefficiency. Without the thorough training in modern agricultural techniques that they needed, they often used either too little or too much fertilizer, and sometimes, it was not only a case of the quantity of the fertilizer, but the wrong kind for the particular soil. Mesmerized by the sales pitches of representatives of the metropolitan chemical cartels, they abandoned traditional methods of composting and of using organic fertilizers, like seaweed. They also used pesticides and herbicides without rhyme or reason and this led to a further worsening of the situation. Those estate owners were a class that had outlived its usefulness and wanted a push into the oblivion that was waiting for them.

Colonial and neo-colonial agricultural research stations were staffed with personnel who were rigidly stratified, those at the top seldom ventured outside of their laboratories and comfortable offices, while the lower echelon field officers who were more aware of the need to modernize the system for the benefit of both small farmers

and the big estates, were seldom listened to. It was a dog-in-the-manger system in which vast acreages of unused and under-used land were fenced off and dotted with "No Trespassing" signs. At the same time, outside the fenced-in estates, were the highly motivated small farmers and landless peasants, who with the right kind of socialist organization, scientific help and advice, loans, and efficient storage and marketing facilities, could have made those lands productive. The rural population was essentially made up of those outside of the fences and those inside. The planters, who were themselves usually in debt to the tops of their ears, took most of the meagre returns for themselves and their families, while the small hand-outs left for the workers plunged them deeper and deeper into a vortex of perpetual poverty. Trapped there, and constantly struggling to escape, they eked out a marginal living.

The women, who were more often than not abandoned by the men who had fathered their children, brought up those out-of-wedlock offspring with the aid of grandmothers, aunts, godmothers, sisters and female cousins. That caucus of women acted as a stable cultural and psychological bridge between the generations. They taught the children they were caring for from their earliest youth, that they should struggle to escape the vortex of poverty in which so many of them were trapped, and that they should strive never to have to 'slave' on a planter's estate. It was a heroic battle, in which those men who remained as heads of families and fulfilled their responsibilities fought side by side with the women; but because women could find employment more readily, as washer-women, seamstresses, domestics and agricultural workers, and because they were paid lower wages than men, they were mostly the ones who brought up the new generations. They saw education as the best means of escaping the trap of poverty, and getting away from the crab-in-the-barrel syndrome. (That is, when crabs are packed together in a barrel, if one tries to escape the others pull it back into the impotent struggling mass). But the majority of those agricultural workers on the estates saw their children grow up generation after generation under-nourished and illiterate, and the harder they strived to break out, the more enmeshed they became in a tangled web of colonial neo-slavery.

During that hundred and three-year interim, the people again and again tested the strength of their oppressors by both individual and collective acts of defiance. And, in 1951, they were certain that their

hour had struck: that it was time to rise up once more and confront those who 117 years after emancipation were still refusing to acknowledge that they were human.

Chris Searle, that indefatigable English educator and author who had worked so selflessly for the Grenadian Revolution, in his book, *Grenada: The Struggle Against Destabilization*, wrote:

By 1950 Grenada had reached a certain conjunction of contradictions, which, when rubbed together would spark off great upsurge and change. The Plantocracy, composed largely of the descendants of the slaveowners, still controlled two-thirds of the richest cultivated land in the island. This ownership was complemented by their participation in the colonial state machinery. They were allowed two of the members on the three-member Legislative Council which operated directly below the government-appointed Executive Council. Their estates comprised at least fifty acres, and this contrasted starkly with the small holdings of up to five acres of the ten thousand peasant farmers. Their land given over to the three cash crops of bananas, nutmegs and cocoa, was also of a much poorer quality. A very small national capitalist class owned the few factories and import and retail agencies in St. George's, the main urban center.

Thus the balance of the population was engaged primarily in agricultural labour on the large private estates, working in woeful conditions that had not changed substantially since the time of emancipation, and earning a mere eighty-two cents a day. These paltry wages were linked perilously to the world market prices of the export crops, an arrangement entered into by the Grenada Trade Union Council, which kept docilely in line with the Employers Society.

Towards the end of 1950, the world prices of cocoa fell and the wages of the agricultural

workers plummeted accordingly. The requests of the TUC to the employers to forego a wages reduction met with a stony refusal. This was accompanied by a campaign by certain estate owners to evict workers who had been squatting on land belonging to the estates. Thus the issues of wages and land, fused by the arrogant racism of the overwhelmingly white and mulatto plantocracy towards the black work force, created the scenario for a release of pent-up anger and determination which erupted in February 1951, as Sky Red flamed through the island. Into this situation walked Eric Matthew Gairy . . .<sup>1</sup>

This was a replay of the 1848 strike of agricultural workers in St. Patrick's—the same demand by the plantocrats that the workers accept a cut in their miserable wages, and the same threat of eviction from the huts they lived in and the parcels of land they were allowed to cultivate for themselves. After 103 years of acting out the role of bosses, the planters had learnt nothing and forgotten nothing.

When Eric Gairy made his appearance on the Grenadian scene Maurice Bishop was seven years old. Gairy, like Bishop's father, Rupert Bishop, had worked in Aruba. The British colonial authorities in the Caribbean were notorious for the miserly wages that they paid. Earlier on in this historical narrative, it was mentioned that the wages of Grenadian agricultural workers had remained frozen at one shilling per day for a century, and others on the lower rungs of the social ladder—porters, janitors, junior clerks, messengers, policemen, elementary school teachers fared no better. The Caribbean people, therefore, were willing to emigrate to any country on earth if they were assured of finding jobs, higher pay and reasonable working conditions. Aruba and Trinidad were the first choices for Grenadian migrants with the former enjoying a slight edge; earlier in the century it had been Panama. The giant U.S. and Dutch oil cartels had built extensive oil refinery complexes on the Dutch-owned ABC islands. The logic behind this was simple: if there was political and social unrest on the oil-producing Venezuelan mainland the refineries would be beyond the reach of any kind of insurgency threatening to reclaim this valuable natural resource for the people. Those refineries could

also be used as an economic noose to strangle any such movement in its cradle. The wages paid by those oil companies were low by U.S. standards, but by Grenadian standards they were very attractive. Both Rupert Bishop and Gairy went to Aruba to work so that they could save a portion of their earnings over a period of time and return to Grenada with enough to establish themselves as persons with independent means. Gairy was expelled before he realised his dream. There is amongst marginals in the Caribbean both an upward mobility and a downward one. The loss of a job can hurl one of those marginals back into the ranks of the drifters, the scufflers and the lumpen.

An English colonial official in Guyana had once declared when he was in his cups that the British had perfected a "zero policy" in their world-wide empire. It was one that started by giving all British colonial subjects zero-zero for character, zero for ability, zero for intelligence, initiative and creative ability—and starting from zero those subjects then had to earn their marks. In this zero game, the British were the self-appointed arbiters who awarded the marks. It was, therefore, impossible for colonials to earn more than three points out of ten. If there were extraordinary individuals who had the malice to earn more than three, the British proconsuls simply changed the rules of the game. Gairy was a victim of the Zero Syndrome. He had once boasted to a group of Grenadian peasants that he had come from the same "nothing" from which they had come. At that moment, he was revealing a truth that had slipped through the cracks of his usual bombast – that in his own eyes he was a zeroperson.

How did Grenada become the first country in the English-speaking Caribbean to overthrow a neo-colonial government and to seize power in the name of the people? Prior to that revolution, Grenadians had established a long and heroic history of struggle. It began with the Caribs preventing their island from being settled by Europeans for one hundred and fifty-two years after Columbus had first sighted it in 1498. It continued through the arrival of the French settlers and the slaves from Africa they brought with them. The Caribs were defeated and pushed into the sea. Grenada changed hands during the fierce. Franco-English rivalries for territories in the Caribbean, and finally ended up as a British colony. But the British, after a short interlude when the French had seized the island once more, were just establishing their power in Grenada and a cluster of the Leeward and

Windward islands, when the Fedon revolt came very close to establishing the first independent republic in the Caribbean since the era of colonization began. The struggle to end slavery was won forty-two years after the revolt was suppressed. With slavery behind them, the Grenadian people began breaking away from the stultifying plantation environment and setting up their own institutions in villages and towns. In 1848, the agricultural workers in St. Patrick's rose up briefly to protest wage cuts and the threat of eviction from their cottages, and six years later a cholera epidemic decimated the ranks of the working people. Immigrant workers were brought in to dampen the ardour of those Grenadians who were learning month by month how to organize, unite and fight against the unholy alliance of plantocrats and colonial proconsuls. But the indentured labor project was a flop, the waves of Africans, East Indians, Maltese and Portuguese moved into the estates to which they had been assigned, took one look at what they had to offer, and most of them moved out again.

## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

In the first three decades of the 20th century, two great Grenadian nationalist leaders emerged: Theophilous Marryshow and Tubal Uriah Buzz Butler. The former was from the upper strata of the petit bourgeois class and was an intellectual, a journalist, a legislator, a trade unionist, and a tireless proselytiser for Grenadian self-government and a federation of the English-speaking Caribbean islands. The other was a worker, and an ex-serviceman. Marryshow used his paper **The West Indian** to raise the level of consciousness of the Grenadian people and to give them a sense of being part of a widely scattered, but culturally and historically cohesive community of island peoples. He died in 1958, the year that the short-lived Caribbean Federation came into being. He did not know that it would collapse in disarray by 1962.

Marryshow was one of the most skillful negotiators to appear on the Caribbean political scene in the 20th Century. He understood, hemmed in as he was by the repressive colonial state apparatus and racial prejudice, that politics was the art of the possible, and that with the support of the majority of people, "the possible" could be pushed to limits far beyond the accepted traditional boundaries. When the British governor and his local minions kept blocking moves to end Grenada's dictatorial Crown Colony status, Marryshow went to England and persuaded the British Government to give wider powers to elected representatives of the Grenadian people. He was a modest man in his private life, highly principled and giving the impression of being easygoing. But he was a formidable public figure, charismatic and enormously persuasive. As one of his colleagues had declared at a public meeting after his death "Gairy was not fit to lick his boots."

Once, in 1931, when he had tried to block a Customs Amendment Order, and when his motion in the Legislature calling on the Secretary of State to appoint a commission to look into the question of self-government for Grenada had been shunted aside, he appealed to the people to come out in his support. Over ten thousand demonstrators

responded to his appeal. He, and others from the Grenada Working-men's Association led that outpouring of protestors and sent clear messages to the governor and the colonial authorities in England that time was running out and if concessions were not made in response to their moderate demands, it would be "the fire next time". Marryshou, was, in fact, a safety valve for the popular discontents. He was, if not entirely on social terms with the plantocrats, at least on speaking terms with them, and he was also trusted by the disenfranchised majority. When he led that great concourse of demonstrators, Grenada was still feeling the pinch of an international economic depression, and a word from him could have turned that peaceful march into an insurrection. But his sense of history and of the rhythms of the peoples' awakening were too good for him to have made such an error. He kept on with the day-to-day work of publishing *The West Indian* (which under Bishop's government was re-named the Free West Indian), travelled constantly from island to island and used his assured seat in the Legislative Council as a platform for agitating for self-government not only for Grenada, but for the whole of the English-speaking Caribbean.

Butler, like Marryshou, was born when Victoria was still Queen of England, and the British Empire was one upon which the sun never set. But he was one of the workers who had carried that Empire on their backs, and as Roger Mais, the outstanding Jamaican novelist, poet and pamphleteer had written, for toilers like Butler, the sun had never risen on the British Empire. His formal education was rudimentary but his family had by hard work and sacrifice ensured that he acquired a basic grounding in the three R's. During World War I, he joined the West India Regiment and fought against Turks and Germans in the Middle East. As a soldier, in that Regiment, he met young men from all over the British West Indies and Guyana for the first time, and he was amazed at how much they had in common – the army had federated them. Most of them had come from working class backgrounds, but there was a sizeable minority, from the petit bourgeois class as well. Captain Andrew Cipriani, a white Trinidadian, was commanding officer of the Regiment and he was a popular leader. The officers were all white or near white. Norman Manley, who would later become Prime Minister of Jamaica, was refused a commission, he was not allowed to rise above the rank of sergeant. Edmond Rohlehr, a brilliant educator and nationalist leader from Guy-

na, was also refused a commission, and he, too, ended up as a sergeant. Butler listened and learnt a great deal from that polyglot group from a variety of social and educational backgrounds in the British West Indies. By the time the war had ended, they had all been exposed to a wide range of new social and political ideas, and they saw the world through different eyes. They had seen, on their way to the Middle East when they stopped off in Britain, how the English lived at home, how stratified the society was and how little the English working class seemed to have benefitted from the spoils of Empire-building. And in the Middle-East, they had seen naked examples of colonial exploitation where peoples of many races, colors and creeds were among the sufferers. It had never dawned on them before that they could have had many potential allies amongst the poor and the wretched of the earth. After 1917, they had also heard news of the Great October Revolution in Russia, there had been lively debates about that momentous event; and they had, through reading and by word-of-mouth, been exposed to sympathetic points-of-view that were diametrically opposed to the simplistic and virulent propaganda that the British authorities were putting out. The propaganda was often counter-productive. The more the colonizers denounced the Bolshevik revolutionaries, the more interested the thinking elements amongst the colonized became in them. When Butler and the other ex-servicemen returned to Grenada, it was as though they were seeing their society for the first time. The stark poverty, the multitude of petty humiliations, the arrogance of a ruling class, which compared to the more sophisticated ones abroad, was parochial and backward. How could they have allowed those boorish planters and their allies to have strutted on the center-stage and lorded it over them for so long? they had asked themselves. The battle lines for a new struggle were drawn from the moment they had set foot on their native soil again. Butler joined the Grenada Representative Government Movement, an organization agitating for changes in the autocratic system of colonial rule. In 1919, he also founded the Grenada Union of Returned Soldiers. When the paltry allowances to ex-servicemen, the dependents of those killed in action and the disabled were arbitrarily cut off by the governor, mysterious fires broke out all over St. George's. It was a time when the working people were facing the consequences of another economic recession and when prices and unemployment were spiralling upwards. The governor and a group of busines-

smen offered a \$1,200 reward for information leading to the arrest of those responsible.<sup>1</sup> No one was ever caught. For an agricultural worker earning 24 cents per day, \$1,200 was a colossal sum of money. But solidarity with those expressing the peoples' collective discontent through arson was so absolute that nobody stepped forward to betray the protestors and to claim the reward.

In 1921, Butler emigrated to Trinidad and found work in the oil fields. Trinidad was at that time the largest producer of oil in the British Empire. For eight years, Butler joined the ranks of the most highly-developed industrial proletariat in the British West Indies. He was a good worker, and because he was always ready to defend his rights and those of his workmates, he became widely respected by his peers. In 1929, while trying to protect a young and inexperienced worker he was seriously injured, and with the poor medical services available, he ended up being lame for the rest of his life. But being partially disabled and unable to do the hard manual work he had done before, he was released to function as a full time union organizer and a part-time worker.

Butler had an unerring instinct for divining well in advance where the epicenter of an impending social upheaval was likely to be, and to position himself there. His anger against colonial injustices and his passion to change things for the better, were so interwoven with the peoples', that it was difficult to tell if his gift for highlighting collective discontents was his by virtue of his being a natural leader, or if he was being inexorably pushed by his impatient followers. In 1937, the Trinidadian oilfields, like the bauxite mining enclave in Guyana, were company-controlled fiefdoms inside of British Colonies. Once you passed the armed guards at the gates and set foot on company-owned land, a system of apartheid more ruthless than the one in South Africa prevailed. The company police and security guards were a law unto themselves. The job to which each worker was assigned was designated on the identity card he or she carried. The card indicated whether you did manual, clerical or skilled work, and each category was an absolute one. Once you were assigned to one of the categories, you could never change your status. Those cards were badges of peonage, and, of course, all of the best and the highest-paid jobs were reserved for whites. And as for black and Indian workers, no matter how much ability they had or how much seniority they established, they could never hope to be promoted to the more lucrative and prestigious jobs.

Outside the gates, where the colonial laws were in force, even though those laws were heavily biased in favour of the colonial proconsuls and their immediate circle of landowners, business-men, company officials, bankers, traders and white or near-white lawyers and doctors, there were still loopholes which the dispossessed could take advantage of from time to time. Inside the gates, however, it was as though an unsavory marriage had taken place between British and American colonizers, and in this obscene union, the worst attributes of both had come together – the racism, the mindless spate of petty humiliations, the meanness of spirit, the arrogance of power, the absence of compassion for those upon whom daily atrocities were being inflicted and the fantasy that the abysmal state of affairs, over which a small clique of company directors and managers presided, would last forever. In that marriage, the worse attributes of the two partners had surfaced and if there were any redeeming ones, they were invisible.

On June 19, 1937, Butler, whose mastery of understatement could, on occasion, be second to none, called for a sit-down strike of oil workers.<sup>2</sup> He knew that those oil workers and their supporters had reached the end of their tether, and he also knew how mindlessly provocative the police could be. By the early afternoon of the 19th, it was as though floodgates had been opened, and the whole population of southern Trinidad had poured into the streets of San Fernando. The mood of the crowd was calm. Thousands of marching feet propelled that crowd towards the platform onto which Butler had limped his way to speak. He spoke in a language that the listening thousands understood so perfectly that it was as though each individual was hearing an echo of his or her own discontent in every syllable he uttered. He kept repeating in his Mark Anthony type of oration that he had come not to incite but to appeal for peaceful change; and, in the next breath, he said that, in days gone by, those who had come to protest in peace had often been forced to stand up and defend themselves. Then he insisted once more that he was only spinning out a tale of what had happened in the past. When the police saw how Butler's barbed innuendoes were moving the crowd to action, they tried to arrest him. The women turned on them like avenging furies and the sit-down strike was transformed into an insurrection. Before order was restored, 14 innocent people were shot dead by the police, and 59 were injured.<sup>3</sup> Butler went underground. With a price on his head, and the whole colonial state apparatus leaving no stone unturned to

find him, he remained in hiding month after month; and he only gave himself up when he realized how much unnecessary suffering his continued disappearance was inflicting on the workers who were protecting him. He was tried and sentenced to 2 years in prison for sedition. Butler was detained once more at the beginning of World War II. The British colonial authorities, paradoxically, used this anti-fascist war as an excuse for imprisoning some of the most militant anti-colonial fighters. Butler engineered an oil workers strike in 1941, and was incarcerated until 1945. In 1946, he called for a general strike and he and his followers stormed the main colonial administrative headquarters in Port-of-Spain.<sup>4</sup> Through his trade union and political activities, Butler had shaken loose the foundations of the British colonial system in Trinidad, opening fissures out of which a new leadership would emerge and jostle him aside. However, he remains a legend in the history of the Caribbean peoples' anti-colonial struggle.

Gairy had tried organizing oil workers in Aruba, and had been expelled by the Dutch colonial government. But, Gairy was more of a tribal chief of the lumpen elements in the towns, and the culturally-alienated groups of peasants, hustlers, and itinerant agricultural workers in the countryside, than he was a modern trade union leader. With a sophisticated proletarian group like the oil workers in Aruba, his messianic mumbojumbo, his tourist version of village cults and his preoccupation with the fictions that cheap pulp magazines keep churning out to titillate the jaded appetites of readers already surfeited with sensationalized half-truths, would hardly have gone down very well. It is significant that there is no record of those workers having demonstrated any concern over his expulsion, by word or deed.

A great deal has been written about Gairy by political pundits, social scientists and journalists, and yet, we know so little about him. In Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, Cassius had said, "the fault, dear Brutus is not in our stars, but in ourselves," and this applies to all of those who have been using borrowed methodologies to penetrate into the heart of Gairyism. Marx had declared that the novels in Balzac's *Comédie Humaine* tell us more about the turbulent history of 19th century France than do all the treatises written by scholars. Michelet's writings, which were more like documentary novels than conventional historical accounts, were a panoramic preface and an inspiration to both Balzac and Dumas in their vast literary enterprises. They paraded before us on the turbulent, glittering and at times debased and

tawdry stage of French history, thousands of characters who lived and loved and died and struggled. And the reader was often drawn so completely into that vivid drama that he could almost feel that he was a part of the jostling crowds.

Gairy, bursting onto the stage of Caribbean history to play the role of a buffoon, a trickster, a tyrant, an obeiahman, a mystic and a revisionist preacher, will continue to baffle the pundits until they turn to the pages of Caribbean novels. Those novels will not by themselves tell us everything about the man, but they provide invaluable clues. The rest can be filled in by listening to the people as they recount stories about their home-grown tyrant. The oral tradition in Grenada and the rest of the English-speaking Caribbean is part of a sub-culture that is firmly implanted in the matrix of the culture as a whole. The Gairyites of the Caribbean are balanced in an uneasy equipoise on the borders between the oral and written forms of that region's culture, on the one hand, and the psychological no-man's-land between the countryside and the city on the other. In their limbo-world, they are an element of the petit bourgeoisie of whom it is very true to say that a little knowledge is a dangerous thing. They represent a group which, in its transition from the countryside to the city suffered from an incipient alienation and a withering of its cultural roots. They lost touch with the rich and enduring peasant culture with its essences of folklore, of struggle, and its profound understanding of how a people through their creative labor establish a symbiotic relationship with the real and mythic landscapes of their past and present. And by leaving the land, they also entered the outer peripheries of an urban culture. In the rigidly stratified colonial society, they then found that there was really no safe niche for them, so they became social drifters. High unemployment and an educational system that created a surfeit of clerks merely added new recruits to the already swollen ranks of those drifters. One can find Gairy leering out of the pages of George Lamming's **Season of Adventure** as a leader of the people who is being sucked into a kind of Emperor Jones syndrome; or leaping out of the pages of **Ruler in Hiroona**, when the leading character is transformed through a strike of dock workers from being an unemployed drifter, into a leader. Once he had preyed upon the peoples' discontents, and occupied the seat of the Prime Minister, "he then unto the ladder turns his back, scorning the base degrees by which he

did ascend,"<sup>5</sup> It is not a question of power corrupting those characters for they grew up in a corrupt colonial society where nepotism, bribery and favouritism were institutionalized, and you were only penalized if you didn't play the game according to the rules, their lumpen followers did not have to speculate about whether they would be corrupt or not. Rather, they assumed that they would be and hoped that when they began dipping their hand into the public till, they would take for themselves, but leave enough to meet the basic needs of the people. Gairy is an Armstrong, in Roy Heath's trilogy **From the Heat of the Day, One Generation and Genetha.**

When one looks into Armstrong's heart, one finds there the pent-up resentments, the meanness of spirit, the cunning, the source of his love-hate attitude towards the brown, mulatto and black Afro-Saxons whom he wanted to both mimic and to humiliate. Those Afro-Saxons, like the Davis family in the trilogy, which Armstrong had entered through marriage, had failed completely to understand the Armstrongs of their society. Those Armstrongs were a synonym for a petit bourgeois group with an infinite capacity for nursing grudges; a monumental vindictiveness, an ingrained habit of servility on the one hand and of bombast on the other; despised by everyone and afflicted with a deep selfhatred, they could bide their time for decades, waiting to settle scores with real and imagined enemies. During the long waiting years, too, they could wear a mask of pious humility that would have made Uriah Heep's seem bold and forthright by comparison. Armstrongism was as much a part of the Gairy psyche as the white and red corpuscles in his bloodstream. Like Armstrong, instead of principles, Gairy had anancy strategems. The only real difference between the two was that Armstrong was a psychologically mutilated John the Baptist, heralding the coming of our maverick anancy-lumpen-preacher-messiahs whom the independence movement would spawn all over the Caribbean to provide the world with a neo-colonial theatre of the absurd. The archetypal lumpen-preacher-anancy-messiah in the English-speaking Caribbean was the late Sir Alexander Bustamante of Jamaica. He was a character about whom so many apocryphal stories have been told that collecting even a small percentage of those spicy tales, one would be able to fill a library. One of those stories is that when he was elected Premier, he summoned his newly appointed Cabinet and told the ministers that he had no doubt whatsoever that they were going to accept bribes when they were of-

ferred to them; and before they could protest their innocence of such base intentions, he explained that since they were new to the business of taking bribes they would have to spend too much valuable time learning the fine points of that villainous skill. He then proceeded to hand each minister a list of firms and corporations that were likely to offer bribes and the amounts that should be demanded. Having done this he then ordered them to get on with the job of running their ministries. In the devilishly wicked and cynical role that this story shows Bustamante playing, one catches a glimpse not only of the anancy-lumpem-preacher-messah type, but of something more profound: the acknowledgement by the colonized of the colonizer and his agents as an omnipotent force, one above and beyond moral issues of right or wrong. Gairy, Armstrong, Bustamante and the class they represent, and here one has the best and the worst of the anancy-lumpen-preacher-messiah types, have a faith in British colonial power and in the British Monarchy that borders on idolatry. It is the same kind of blind and unfathomable faith that penitents had for Dostoevsky's Grand Inquisitor. A further point that the Bustamante story underlines is that he, a former moneylender, had a shrewd understanding of those who were, like himself, trapped in the anancy syndrome; and as the Caribbean saying goes, "It takes one to know one". When Bustamante had told Winston Churchill in an aside at a Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference, "You're the best of your kind, you're descended from Marlborough; and I'm the best of my kind, I come from the gutter." He was, in fact, speaking for all of the lumpen-anancys of the neo-colonial Caribbean. The gutter and not the wider human world was the base from which they had been trained like Pavlovian dogs to see themselves emerging. But Bustamante was the cleverest and most astute member of that class. He had learnt from the British colonizer, as the story demonstrates, that once you institutionalized corruption, you could lend to it a certain aura of respectability and call it by other names.

Gairy was a crude and oafish lumpen-anancy-preacher-messiah type. His greed for material wealth and baubles went beyond the normal avarice of his class. Bustamante on the other hand lived simply and had a contempt for material things. His main preoccupation was with power and political survival. Gairy succeeded in alienating his followers and eventually discrediting himself in their eyes. He was, therefore, compelled by the logic of the situation he himself created

to become more and more tyrannical. Bustamante was far too clever to have taken such an imbecile road. But there were other players, stage managers and directors in that political drama. The British colonial proconsuls, bogged down in their old-fashioned racism, began waking up to the fact that they were going to need reliable custodians to look after their economic interests in colonies that won their independence. They had to make sure that independence would not bring an end to economic dependence. A whole new industry came into being as a result of the independence movement. British firms were given contracts to stage-manage the different independence celebrations. In the Caribbean, no expenses are spared for the celebration of weddings, christenings, and it is also the custom to save up for a lifetime so that families could make a good showing at funerals. Independence celebrations were added to that list.

The British, with their long experience of dealing with colonial dissidents, very shrewdly decided that the charismatic lumpen-anancy-preacher-messiah type, coming as they were from what had been an anonymous stratum of the petty bourgeois class, would be the best collaborators with imperialism that they could hope to find.

Gairy, an outstanding example of this charismatic lumpen-anancy-preacher-messiah type, had emerged as the leader of an island-wide strike in 1951. The British authorities were shrewd enough to understand that the epicenter of power had shifted away from the plantocrats and their business allies permanently. They arrested Gairy, detained him aboard a warship, the H.M.S. Devonshire, and afterwards, on the island of Carriacou. He was subsequently released. He then proceeded with a messianic fervour to put out the very fires that he had helped to kindle and fan into the flames of a national rebellion. As a reward for the betrayal of his followers, his Grenada Manual and Mental Workers Union was recognized. The era of Gairyism had begun.

## CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Maurice Bishop was born in Aruba in 1944. But his parents, like so many migrants from Grenada who could afford it, made sure that he was brought up and educated in Grenada. This is part of a phenomenon of British West Indian immigrants to non-English speaking countries in the Caribbean Basin. Even when most of them could not afford to send their children to schools "back home" (meaning the particular island or mainland territory from which the immigrants had come), generation after generation was brought up steeped in the home culture and speaking the English dialect of their forbears. After three, four or five generations it is possible to find descendants of immigrants from the British West Indies in Panama, the Bluefields area of Nicaragua, the Oriente province of Cuba, Costa Rica, the Caribbean and Pacific coasts of Columbia, the island of Roatan and in Venezuela who will speak their English dialect with the particular cadences and inflections of Grenada, Trinidad, Barbados, Jamaica, Guyana or Belize (formerly British Honduras). And buried deep inside the language are the crucial basics of a West Indian culture – folktales, cuisine, music and a pool of memories which a strong oral tradition kept refurbishing until it was constantly brimming over.

If Bishop's parents had remained in Aruba, he would have grown up speaking Dutch and Papiamentu. Papiamentu is an Afro-Portuguese-based creole which is the lingua franca of the people of Aruba, Curacao and Bonaire. Bishop's political career would then have been rooted in the Dutch Antilles. It is interesting to speculate on what might then have happened. One can picture him becoming a modern-day Uriah Butler, leading not just oil workers but a federation of Dutch Antillean islands and mainland territories to independence.

Bishop's boyhood and early youth was spent in a Grenada that was ruled jointly by Gairy and his British colonial tutors. Gairy, like the other neo-colonial leaders of his generation, served a long apprenticeship under the watchful eye of British colonial governors. Gairy's

training as a neo-colonial satrap lasted for 23 years. Those governors cum British colonial headmasters, are now rather shy to take credit for their undistinguished alumni. However, they must be accorded their due for the fools, buffoons, tyrants and the corrupt and perverse mimicmen they helped to foist upon the Caribbean people in the name of independence, democracy and the Westminster model. But the situation is far from being uniformly abysmal since there were many who escaped the blight of that colonial tutelage. A partial list includes Captain Cipriani, the father of Trinidad's independence movement; Marryshow, the trail-blazer for a Caribbean Federation; the Manley father and son, both exceptional Jamaican leaders and statesmen touched with genius; Cheddi Jagan, the first Marxist leader in the British Empire to come to power on a wave of popular support; the great fighter, scholar, revolutionary leader, Walter Rodney; Eusi Kaywana, the Guyanese leader whose name has become a synonym for incorruptibility and political integrity; C.L.R. James, the revered Marxist scholar, literary critic, historian and ideologue of world revolution; Richard Hart and Trevor Munroe, the old and the young luminaries of the Jamaican struggle; Hart is a lucid chronicler of Caribbean slave rebellions, and a lawyer who somehow illuminates both the past and the present for us with a precise clinical mind. The list of those who came out of the same system that produced Gairy can go on and on. C.L.R. James reminds us again and again that the West Indies remains one of the most unique territories on earth – apart from Cuba, where a new civilization is being created, – the rest of the archipelago, he says, is made up of countries with 20th century people living in 17th century economies. Leaders and their followers do not fall from the sky like hail-stones, they are part of an evolving human world. In the Caribbean, colonialism and chattel slavery gave way to colonialism and wage slavery; and the independence movement, which left the colonial economies intact, foisted neo-colonialism upon the Caribbean peoples. The petit bourgeois leadership that took over as custodians and satraps of imperialism, continue to entertain the world with their grotesque exhibitions of tyranny. The Caribbean has spawned its own Bokassas, Amins, Tshombes, Kabakas and Shahs – they spend millions on their official residences, while festering public hospitals remain gigantic incubators of disease. In the midst of their starving people, they hold Louis XIV-type banquets.

Maurice Bishop was the exception that proved the rule. He entered

the arena of politics when neo-colonialism, as a social and political system, was becoming more and more untenable in the Caribbean. For a shining moment in Caribbean history, he leaped over the almost insurmountable obstacles between neocolonialism and a genuine liberation, and took a whole nation with him. But a small clique from the ranks of those whom he had led onwards and upwards to heights they had never dreamt of reaching, began stinging themselves to death like scorpions and smothered him in a self-destructive orgy. And, like a pack of jackals on the trail of a dying beast, the U.S. imperialists moved in for the kill and pushed them all back into the chasm.

Bishop and Fedon had a great deal in common. They were both of mixed blood. And, in Bishop's case, in addition to the African and European blood mixtures, there was something of the Caribs in his high cheek bones. Both Bishop and Fedon were men of the Antilles, well above average in height with the physique and coordination of athletes, and endowed with the kind of creative imaginations that made it possible for ideas to stir them to the depths of their beings. They both had parents and able tutors who taught them that the achievement of moral integrity was the ultimate goal to which one could aspire, and that one could only reach that goal by constantly aligning one's actions with one's beliefs.

One only caught a glimpse of Fedon's parents in the pages of a diary that a ship's captain left us, and that account was a secondhand one. But, we know of Bishop's father, a kindhearted and at the same time, a strict parent. He taught his son not only how to live by the principles he embraced, but also how to die for them. Bishop's father was shot by Gairy's murderous hirelings. The circumstances of his death are told with a simple eloquence by Alimenta Bishop, his widow, that Caribbean wife and mother who had made the acquaintance of so much sorrow:

Every day he would be demonstrating, walking along the road on the outside of the schoolchildren. Then on the twenty-first, someone told him not to go, that there would be real trouble that day. But Rupert responded, 'No, don't tell people that! If you tell them that they won't go to the demonstration. It is better to die on your feet

than to creep on your knees all the days of your life.'

When the first schoolchildren were hurt on the demonstration, when Gairy's men came along the Carenage with bottles, stones and guns, Rupert threw the keys of his car to Kenrick Radix and told him to drive the children directly to the hospital for attention.

Upstairs in Otway House the people were taking refuge, particularly women and schoolchildren. Rupert sat behind the door, jamming it shut and preventing it from being opened. Then they broke down the door and, as he stood up to block the doorway, they shot him point blank while the tear gas smothered the room and the people inside were coughing and choking.<sup>1</sup>

So, Rupert Bishop died on the 21st of January, 1974, defending Grenada's children, and nine years later, his son would die defending the whole nation from enemies without and within.

Fedon's teacher was a Jesuit, Bishop's teachers were schooled in a kind of manichiestic Victorian morality, one that lingered in the colonies long after it had been abandoned in Britain. Those teachers had also imbibed something of a Ruskinian ethic, and they taught their pupils that some manual labor along with intellectual work created a more wholesome and balanced personality, than if one devoted one's life entirely to one or the other. Bishop was open, trusting, quixotic, generous to a fault. Fedon trusted all of his followers, but none too much. Bishop was a magnificent orator. He used the great rallies which were held after the revolution to teach the people, heighten the level of their consciousness, and to take them into his confidence. He came to symbolize the finest and the best in Grenadians of every shade and color, from every walk of life. He made the most despised stand up and stretch limbs stiff from too much kneeling; and those the Gairy dictatorship had forced to bow their heads, could walk tall and hold their heads up high after listening to him. Fedon was a good listener and spoke mostly through his deeds. Both Fedon and Bishop were men of action. They went into battle with a total disregard for their own safety, and were strangers to fear. We do not know how either of them died, but we are certain that they died heroically.

There are moments when one is tempted to delve into the life of a heroic figure and dredge up incidents which can be blown out of proportion to lend an artificial consistency to the great man's past. Bishop's life, however, does not lend itself very easily to this exercise. He had an easy-going boyhood and youth, sprinkled with dreams of doing many things and being many different things, from one season of fleeting ambitions to another. This was part of his having a restless and inquisitive mind and a driving urge to learn more about the world around him, than the narrow and rigid curriculum at his grammar school, and the colonial Gairyite society with its intellectual poverty would allow him to learn. Then, there were social events that he would take part in as a teenager – parties, games and outings in the country. Those events would define for him the particular niche in the petit bourgeois hierarchy to which he had been assigned, but Gairyism had shattered the old rigid social gradations so typical of West Indian colonial society, based on skin color, caste, wealth and class. And there were peculiar tribal inventions of that society dealing with whether one had European features or not, the kind of hair one had. There was 'good hair' or what Afro-Americans called 'blow-hair' that was hair that was soft enough for the wind to run its finger through, and there was 'bad hair' or negro hair, through which a comb had to fight its way. The ordinary folk countered that pejorative slur on their hair and said that African hair was obedient hair, it did exactly what its owner wanted it to do. European hair was naturally disobedient since it was prey to every whim and caprice of the wind, rain, humidity, or even a shake of the head.

Gairy and his notorious thugs, the Mongoose Gang, had exposed the venality, the opportunism, the absence of integrity of the plantocracy, and the business and professional community. They did their best to make peace with Gairyism at the beginning of his climb to power. It was only after he seemed to be acting like a wounded buffalo, threatening to trample into the ground friend and foe alike, that they turned against him. They had been willing to live with his brutal suppression of the ordinary folk, but when it became clear that Gairy was also nursing grudges against them and their families, they finally came to their senses and turned to Bishop and the people to save them. As the archetypal lumpen character, Gairy personalized everything. Power did not corrupt him, rather it sucked him into a whirlpool and he never realized that the whirlpool was part of a stream carry-

ing a whole people forward inexorably. In his troubled lumpen fantasies, the whirlpool became a whole world.

The lumpen person in the Caribbean is essentially a fragmented being. Since he is neither a part of the peasant culture, the popular culture that struggles constantly to reaffirm and redefine the vital and indestructible West Indian identity through cricket, the music of Soca, Reggae and Calypso, through a plethora of painters, poets, writers and composers, nor is he a part of that "high culture" that belongs more to the theatre of the absurd than to real life situations, the Afro-Saxon culture with its Knights of the British Empire (one that no longer exists), its Oxford accents and its ludicrous posturings and borrowed mannerisms. In the process of growing up, that lumpen person had to wear so many different masks to carry out so many acts of mimicry, that by the time he became an adult, the person he was had simply disappeared.

Fragments of the lumpen person are scattered throughout the pages of West Indian literature. One catches more than a fleeting glimpse of Gairy in the office-boy in Mittelholzer's perfectly constructed novel, *A Morning at the Office*. With the neo-colonial era about to dawn, that office-boy is poised to seize the new opportunities that will open up to him. He is a creature who has parallels in the Spanish-, Dutch-, and French-speaking worlds of the Antilles, and the colonial world everywhere. But, the parallels are never exact, because he is essentially a creation of the British colonial system in its particular Caribbean context. For generations to come, this particular breed will baffle those who try to analyse their actions through a spectrum of Hispanic, Dutch, French, Portuguese, or metropolitan cultures of any kind. It is a breed that will move with the popular tide of anti-colonialism, and when that tide is gaining momentum and threatening to leave them behind, they will suddenly switch sides and join forces with those trying to check its ineluctable surge. In one generation, that culturally alienated office-boy with his cunning, and his ambition, and with the blessing and bribes of the imperialists, will become a senior government official, an army officer, a diplomat, or a conference nomad, flitting from one international seminar to another, making pontifical and empty pronouncements.

Mittelholzer, in his early works, wrote with a pristine clarity about aspects of the British West Indian condition; and then, in his later years, he became the victim of a kind of Gairyite confusion that he,

himself, had forecast so vividly in works, like **Creole Chips**<sup>2</sup> and **His Majesty's Serfs**<sup>3</sup>. In the literary kaleidoscope of the Caribbean, we catch other vivid glimpses of Gairy in that venal lawyer in Mittelholzer's **The Life and Death of Sylvia**, (the one who robs Sylvia of her inheritance and leaves her to die in penury and despair); or in Fingers, that denizen of the pool rooms who cheats the tragic heroine of her inheritance in Roy Heath's **Genetha**; or in those shiftless immigrant characters around Bernice in Austin Clarke's **The Meeting Point**. Other examples are found in the Uncle Richard character in **Black Midas**, a bully and cheat taking advantage of a decrepit old woman and a child; or among the hustlers in that Kingdom of Chance between London's Bayswater and Marble Arch in Sam Selvon's **The Lonely Londoners**; or in those indomitable characters in George Lammington's **the Emigrants**; or in Wilson Harris' legendary hinterland characters searching in vain for their **Palace of the Peacock**. These characters flit in and out of a kaleidoscope of colors and shadows in the literature and the life of the Caribbean, and those countries abroad where West Indian migrants have settled. They also give us useful and true insights into Gairy and Gairyism, and into the lumpen and alienated petit bourgeois group from which the man and the affliction derived. Horace Campbell explained Gairyism very lucidly when he wrote,

Grenadian politics for the 28 years prior to the 1979 revolution was dominated by the anticolonialism of the region. This anti-colonialism gave rise to the organized and spontaneous revolts of the working people and small farmers. Eric Gairy who was himself a migrant worker emerged from the Trade Union movement to take a predominant role in the society. Without a coherent program to solve the problems of unemployment, poverty, and alienation, Gairyism became a form of political overrule of force and repression which is now prevalent in the Eastern Caribbean . . .<sup>4</sup>

This analysis can be extended to point out that the loudly touted "Westminister model", which the neo-colonial leaders in the Carib-

bean claim that they are following, is essentially meaningless in the context of their impoverished societies. They have inherited the ritual without the content. Their mimicry of English parliamentary procedures is little more than an exercise carried out for the entertainment of tourists. They use the mace and other symbols of authority like juju totems to ward off the 'evil spirits' of unemployment, a corrupt and endemically incompetent colonial civil service, an absence of technical and administrative skills to run a modern society, archaic and totally inadequate health and educational facilities, and restive masses for whom anti-communist incantations are sounding more and more hollow. The small, insecure ruling elites in the English-speaking Caribbean form alliances of convenience with lumpen elements, and culturally alienated workers and peasants. And, together, they act like hungry beings who entered a banquet hall towards the end of a feast where they devour everything in sight, expecting the dishes to be removed at any moment, and the 'freeness' to come to an abrupt halt. In addition, they try to turn the countries they rule into private fiefdoms and use lumpen and other alienated and gangster elements to cow the people, to murder or terrorize dissidents and to make intellectuals special targets for their wrath. Gairyism was a crude manifestation of neo-colonialism, but with the independence movement spreading across the Windwards and Leewards, the break up of the Federation and the Balkanization of the British West Indies into tiny independent enclaves, a plethora of more sophisticated Gairys began to crop up. Some of them would even, on occasion, spout a few left wing slogans. That brood of new neo-colonial leaders have learnt that what they say need not have even the remotest connection with what they do.

## BISHOP AND FEDON

*We did not find them  
beneath the mounds of sand,  
the careful search of earth and grass  
revealed no scars . . .*

*We looked beneath the tortured roots of trees,  
found nothing in the twisting folds of wind,  
nothing but the skeleton of leaves  
stuck between teeth of rocks.*

*The land has left no trace,  
the lipless wind is mute  
the sun's unsheathed eye  
too furious and too distant  
to give clues.*

*We do not know  
if restless tongues of waves  
lisping on distant shores  
whispered the truth.*

*We do not know . . .  
the seagulls may have scrawled it  
in hieroglyphics  
on pages of the wind  
what they in silent rage had seen.*

*We cannot crack those elemental codes  
that dot indented coves  
at Seamoon, Bacolet, Sauteurs . . .*

*We do not know  
where victims  
of splintered sky-red days of murder lie  
we roll-call names  
in old familiar places  
but leaves clap hands and sigh insanely  
in reply.*

*We do not know . . .  
Though sometimes on our star-infested nights  
we listen to the rising ocean-sea  
the syllables of surf on rocks and sand  
and through the surge and suck  
of waves and wind  
we hear two voices  
splitting the night skies like a thunder-axe,  
scattering galaxies:*

*Bishop and Fedon!  
They cried over there for those who died,  
rose up, embraced  
and brushed the sea-green tears aside,  
embraced again, sang out their poem hymns,  
danced, shouted defiance,  
raised clenched fists high as stars  
THEY LIVE!*

-Jacob Ross and Antar Tiho,  
two poets of the Grenadian Revolution

## CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Bishop was born in the year before World War II ended. By the time he was attending grammar school, the Grenadian veterans who had fought in that anti-fascist war had returned home, sown the seeds of their discontent throughout the society, and left once more for England. Gairyism gave added impetus to the exodus of Grenadians to Trinidad, Britain, Canada and the United States. Amongst the returnees were not only those who had fought in the British and Canadian armed forces, but workers who had been recruited to work in munition and other factories in Britain. Those workers had been exposed to modern working conditions and had experienced the benefits of unionization and worker solidarity; in short, Hitler's threat to the very existence of Britain had compelled that arch-colonial power to proletarianize thousands of British West Indian workers. So, for example, in an extended family unit from rural Grenada, while some members continued to slave for low wages on backward estates, others had escaped to Britain, and, in a single journey, crossed not only trans-Atlantic distances, but centuries in terms of working conditions; and since the island was so small, everything that happened to one or two members of the family was told to everyone in the group as well as to neighbours and friends.

The complexities of Grenadian emigration and re-emigration would require a major study to unravel its mysteries. The figures that are available are woefully inadequate. In the decade between 1960 and 1970, the natural increase of the population was 24,000, but the records show the actual increase as only 4,000. In 1960, the population was 88,677 and in 1970 it was 92,775.<sup>1</sup> So between one quarter and one fifth of the population migrated during that decade.

George Brizan, writing about Grenadian emigration stated that,

Between 1960 and 1969 more than 8,000 Grenadians migrated to the United Kingdom. In addition some 204 were recruited by the British firm of

J.B. Lyons to work in Tea Shops in London and to perform other domestic duties. After serving their indentureship most of those workers remained in England as permanent residents. The following fragmentary figures attempt to give a picture of the flow of migrants to both the U.K. and Canada.

**Grenada Emigrants 1960–74: Selected Areas**

Year	U.K.	Year	Canada
1960	2,343	1967	137
1961	2,298	1968	120
1962	425 (Mar. – Sept.)	1969	281
1964	316 (June – Dec.)	1970	203
1965	913	1971	187
1966	187 (Mar. – Dec.)	1972	153
1967	641	1973	130
1968	270	1974	215
1969	226 (Jan. – June)		

(Source: Grenada, Dept. of Labour, **Statistics & Annual Reports, 1960–74**)<sup>2</sup>

As the table indicates, the flow of migrants to the U.K. was heaviest before 1962. In July of that year, the Commonwealth Immigration Act, which sharply curtailed the flow of coloured immigrants to the U.K., was passed. The Act stipulated that all prospective Commonwealth immigrants had to have an employment voucher before entering the country.

The British Government White Paper of 1965 added new restrictions giving a great deal of latitude to the discretion of immigration officers at ports-of-entry. These were the unsavoury consequences of decades of agitation to "keep Britain white". During the same period the discriminatory laws, that had been on Canadian statute books for a century, were liberalized. Between 1967 and 1974, some 1,546 Grenadians migrated to Canada.<sup>3</sup> However, the 1976 Canadian Government White Paper literally slammed the door in the faces of prospective immigrants from the Caribbean. The almost insurmountable obstacles placed in the way of Caribbean immigrants by Britain,

France and the United States led to a significant increase in Grenada's unemployment figures. Brizan wrote that,

The resurgence in the 1960's of the migrant worker system was part and parcel of the international exploitation of cheap labour, mainly to reduce costs to producers in developed countries and thereby to increase profits.<sup>4</sup>

As early as 1960, 216 men were recruited from Grenada for employment with the Florida Fruit and Vegetable Association. In 1961, 218 more followed.<sup>5</sup> They went on three-year contracts, but the majority were sent back after one year.

In 1967, a further 98 were contracted to work with the firm of Nontanda cutting canes. However, three months after their departure, 34 returned since they were dissatisfied with the price paid for cutting a row of canes. In 1968, a further 98 went to join the same company while some 46 women and one man left for the USA under a migrant labour scheme sponsored by Place-a-Maid Agency, to work as domestics in the homes of US families. In 1960 Grenadian males were recruited to work under contract as prison guards in the Bahamas. Sixty-eight left in July 1965 and 25 in August of the same year. Their contracts stipulated that they should work for three years. They were paid salaries of roughly \$1,700 to \$2,200 per annum with a 5 percent temporary allowance and their passages to and from the Bahamas were paid.<sup>6</sup> Many of those particular immigrants went to the US or to Canada after their three-year stint in the Bahamas.

The Gairyite decades of mismanagement and plunder might have ended sooner but for the economic cushion of remittances from Grenadians living abroad. Between 1959 and 1961, the sum of \$3.7 million EC was remitted to Grenada by migrant workers in postal orders and \$5 million EC in money orders. In addition, 30,000 parcels were sent by relatives and friends abroad.<sup>7</sup> Many of the houses built by rural folk were financed from those remittances.

One of the migrant worker schemes that continued regularly for a long time was the American Island Building and Construction Scheme. Over 140 Grenadian workers went under that scheme, 26 in 1965, 51 in 1966, 46 in 1967, and 7 in 1969.<sup>8</sup> This scheme petered out towards the close of the decade.

Those emigrants were among the most enterprising and the best-qualified of the Grenadian population. The two thousand or so Grenadians, for example, who went to Canada between 1960 and 1967, had to have higher qualifications than immigrants coming from European countries like France or Yugoslavia. Some Grenadians emigrated first to Britain and then to Canada and the United States. And, when immigration doors were slammed in the face of prospective aspirants and infinitesimal quotas were established, a significant illegal immigration began and continues apace. Gairyism lasted as long as it did because of the constant siphoning off of so many citizens who would have resisted his depredations.

Bishop, while he was studying law in England became active in the West Indian student movements. One of the members of the Board of Governors of the West Indian Student Center, (those members were appointed by the different Governments of the British West Indies who financed the Center) in a letter to a friend, had this to say about Bishop,

The first time I met the young Bishop, he had come, on behalf of a group of students that he had obviously organized, to demand that all the facilities of the WIC should be opened to West Indian workers since, among other things, it was their remittances to relatives and friends at home that were helping the governments to make their financial contributions to the center. He was obviously someone from a good family background. His manners were impeccable, and his manner, easy but carrying with it a certain authority. He was a persuasive speaker. The Grenadian inflections in his speech had been sobered by the demands of the Inn where he was reading his law, to articulate clearly. I saw him on several occasions after that, and sometimes he had in tow one or two of the most dazzling belles at the center. Later, I came across a piece in the Kensington Post stating that Bishop had started the first Legal Aid Center for West Indians in the Notting Hill Gate area, and it occurred to me that if he remained in London

the "dark million" would have an able advocate, but it would be a loss for the West Indies. When a student told me some time afterwards that Bishop had returned home, that he had been one of the lawyers in the Rampersaud case in Guyana, in the Desmond Trotter case in Dominica, I could not help thinking that the ardent young man, eloquent, and with manners that were almost courtly, had lived up to expectations. He could have been a Ruben Dario character, a cavalier of the impossible. To this day I still remember, (and this is most unusual when one meets so many interesting people professionally and in one's private life), his slightly smoky voice and his big Diego Rivera eyes. It was said of Rivera, that those enormous eyes of his were given to him so that his vision could encompass vast horizons. One can say the same thing about Bishop.<sup>9</sup>

## CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

The “communist menace”, allegedly threatening Grenada, was not invented by President Reagan in the nineteen eighties. It was merely taken out of the mothballs and used again. The Reagan-type of analysis was very much in vogue during the nineteen fifties, the decade of McCarthyism. The uprising of the Grenadian workers and the month-long general strike that they staged had excited an unbelievable hysteria in the ranks of the planters and businessmen. In a meeting on March 11, 1951, with Sir Robert Arundell, the Governor, Lieutenant Colonel H. de Gale, an apoplectic planter and former military man, had blustered that,

unless the government is prepared to rule we,  
the planters and the merchants will have to take  
the government into our own hands, and we hope  
that you will give us the licence which you have  
given to those communistic hooligans when we  
do act.<sup>1</sup>

And, G.W. Smith, a merchant, had hinted darkly that communists were taking possession of the land. Denis Henry, another pre-Reaganite gentleman had disclosed to the Governor that, “Gairyism is not only a trade union, it bears all the hallmarks of communism.”<sup>2</sup> The Superintendent of Police, Col. A.A. Donald, had informed the Executive Council on February 19th, that behind the peoples’ uprising was “a deep-seated communist plot against constituted authority and that he had taken due precautions to handle the situation.”<sup>3</sup> Sir Robert had said of that Superintendent of Police, “I have never had any confidence in Donald. He appears to be prematurely senile, is rather uncouth and one of the stupidest men I ever had to deal with.”<sup>4</sup> The Governor was also to write, as though he was talking to himself, that the planter and merchants with whom he had to deal “have become hysterical and their jumpiness and constant rumours have not helped.”<sup>5</sup>

But, Sir Robert, obviously after having seen the reports of Gairy's interrogation aboard the HMS Devonshire, was convinced that he could be controlled. He described Gairy as,

an egoist, ambitious for power and with an inferiority complex apparently because of his dark color, determined to show the world that he can rise above birth and color to political leadership of his people.<sup>6</sup>

And, he had written later, "I am reliably informed that Gairy has been hailed as the reincarnation of Fedon, and has been heard to have said that Grenada needs a blood purge."<sup>7</sup>

The Governor was satisfied. Gairy's lumpen-petit bourgeois-anancy concerns were personal and no threat to Britain's economic state in Grenada. He would lift himself up but would keep his followers down, so that the heights he reached could seem to them all the more fantastic. Sir Robert was willing to appoint Gairy as President-General of the Grenada Manual and Mental Workers Union, and crack the whip gently while he jumped through the different political hoops that he and other colonial ring masters would prepare for him. The Gairy apprenticeship lasted for twenty-eight years. The Governor had unhesitatingly turned his back on the cabal of merchants and planters, like de Gale, Noble-Smith and the others when he recognized in Gairy a new custodian of British interests, and one whom the people vociferously supported. The first assignment that Sir Robert had set for his new pupil was to bring the uprising under control immediately. Gairy completed this assignment brilliantly. At a public rally organized with the full cooperation of the government, he had declared,

I have promised His Excellency the Governor, there shall be no more acts of violence in Grenada . . . Do you trust me? Well say after me now: I swear before God and man I shall not commit any acts of violence and if I know . . . Just a minute! if there is someone near to you who does not put up his hand, let his name go to the police . . . I shall not commit any act of

violence, and if I know anyone who commits any act of violence . . . I shall report to the Union head . . . so help me God!<sup>8</sup>

Chris Searle, whose *Grenada: The Struggle Against Destabilization*, is a unique work that blends and orchestrates oral and written forms, wrote,

Those words smothered a rebellion that had proved to be irrepressible by not only the local police force and that of St. Lucia too, but also by the Royal Marines. By October of the same year the first universal adult suffrage elections had been held and Gairy himself was Chief Minister, sitting in the seat of power he had carved out for himself. It had been a skilful opportunistic performance, carved out on the backs of the agro-proletariat, who after some temporary advance and increase in wages, soon found themselves once again in their previous condition . . .<sup>9</sup>

The author then quotes a woman who reflected thirty years later that,

We fought a revolution in 1951 and then Gairy sell we out . . . to the big bourgeois, even though we struggle hard. I remember when shell was blowing and men with cocoa knife and women with cutlass and basket all going to the estate in Marlmount to pick cocoa for weself. We didn't 'fraid even though the estate owner call a bussload of police, and they shoot at we, and later they kill three of we. But Gairy forget we and things get worse. His union never help we . . . just taking all we money and we not getting anything back.<sup>10</sup>

A West Indian Federation was established in 1958. The West Indian people had never been consulted about whether they wanted that particular kind of federation or not. Had they been involved in the

planning of the federation at all stages, they would most likely have given it their unqualified support. But it seemed to them that it had all of a sudden been foisted upon them by the British colonial government and its political allies in the Caribbean.

And they balked at supporting it. Jamaica, one of the most important of the ten islands in the federation withdrew, and Dr. Eric Williams wrote a cryptic epitaph for the project when he announced that "one from ten is zero". In 1962, the top-heavy Federal bureaucracy crashed in upon itself, and each island chose its own path to neo-colonialism. Federation had come and gone, but Gairyism survived. Four seasons of elections came and went. Gairy's touts drummed up and then harvested the votes, and the moment the votes were counted and the election results announced, every promise made on the campaign trail, except the one to clamp down more heavily on the opposition, was thrown into the wastepaper basket. The Duffus Commission, initiated by other Caribbean leaders at the instigation of opposition forces inside Grenada, highlighted the levels of brutality, nepotism and terror meted out to the population by Gairy and The Mongoose Squad. Gairy ignored the recommendations of the Commission. Barbados, Dominica and the other neighbouring islands whose leaders were to become such ardent crusaders for "democracy" when the Peoples Revolutionary Government overthrew Gairy, did not lift a finger to curb his excess. His abrogation of the most elementary human and civil rights and his unabashedly fraudulent manipulation of the preindependence elections was too much for even his British colonial ringmasters to stomach. He had become,

Such an embarrassment . . . that, in the face of the popular protests on the island, the Queen's representative cancelled her visit to hand over the instruments of independence in 1974.<sup>11</sup>

Whereas the British had been colonial ringmasters in the West Indies, as soon as they relinquished their role, the United States took over as the new imperialist circus-masters. President Roosevelt had once referred to the British West Indies as "two and a half million headaches", but headaches or not, during World War II in exchange for fifty obsolete destroyers, the British government, without consulting the Caribbean people, had leased relatively large areas of the islands

and the mainland territory of Guyana to the U.S. The leases were to run for 99 years. The U.S. was very good at bargain-basement purchases of territory. There was the Louisiana purchase from Napoleon, the purchase of Florida from Spain, the U.S. Virgin Islands from Denmark, Alaska, from Czarist Russia; and what was not purchased could be seized like Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado, California, Hawaii and the Phillipines, and fifty-four interventions, every one of them illegal, in the hundred years since 1833 were in addition, meant to ensure that the Caribbean and the rest of the Americas remained within the inner orbit of U.S. exploitation and control. That century of interventions began with the March 11th 1833 landing of U.S. troops in Nicaragua, and ended with the October 25th 1983 U.S. invasion of Grenada.

## CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

A basic scientific law states, for every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction. This law can be used to describe Gairy's Grenada, with its fascist repression on the one hand, and the resistance of the majority of people under the leadership of the New Jewel Movement on the other hand. Twenty-two years of Gairyism brought the New Jewel Movement into being, first to oppose it, and, ultimately, to overthrow it. JEWEL is the acronym for "Joint Endeavor for Welfare, Education and Liberation." The NJM was founded on Sunday, March 11th, 1973 at a meeting in St. David's.<sup>1</sup> It was agreed at that historic meeting that Maurice Bishop's Movement for Assemblies of the People and the JEWEL organization should be merged and a party known as the NEW JEWEL formed.

Bishop from the first moment of his political awakening to the end of his life believed in the full participation of all Grenadians in the running of their country. He had grown up in the midst of class inequalities and class indignities, and was dedicated to the idea of eradicating the root causes of class divisions, racism, and exploitation. The struggle for the liberation of his people became as much a part of him as the cells in his brain. It was the same struggle that Julien Fedon had devoted his life to so valiantly, and the two, Fedon and Bishop came from similar class backgrounds. Bishop not only believed in the full participation of all Grenadians in the government, he began to practice what he preached from the moment he founded his 1973 Movement for the Assemblies of the People (MAP). It was a cruel irony that he should have been murdered by those who were trying to transform his eclectic, popular, democratic, people's revolutionary party into a closed caucus for conspirators. After the merger of MAP and JEWEL, Bishop and Whiteman were elected Joint Coordinating Secretaries of the new organization. Before the merger, the slogan of the paper of the JEWEL was "let's join hands to build a better land."<sup>2</sup>, but Bishop, with his flair for the dramatic and his instinctive understanding of how to lead his people to the barricades, changed the slo-

gan to "not just another society, but a **just** society" and "Let those who labor hold the reins."<sup>3</sup> Bishop, with his drive and his imagination, began to embody the dream of liberation for all Grenadians.

Early in 1973, Lord Brownlow, an English peer, had bought the La Sagesse estate in St. David's, and like a feudal baron from another age, had closed all access roads to the La Sagesse beach. For a hundred years, the people had used the La Sagesse road, playground, and beach freely and Brownlow's insensitive and arrogant prohibition, which everyone knew could only have been considered with Gairy's connivance, aroused the popular anti-colonial ire. The JEWEL organization and MAP, using the occasion to show the depths of craveness that the Gairy government had reached, stage-managed a people's trial of Lord Brownlow. At the end of this drama of the people versus Brownlow and his henchman Gairy, the former was found guilty. A group led by Bishop and Whiteman then proceeded to remove the barriers that Brownlow had ordered erected. A large detachment of police, looking on at those proceedings, and sensing the mood of the people, decided that discretion was the better part of valor, and therefore, did not intervene. Charges were later brought against forty demonstrators and activists, including Bishop and Whiteman. But, in the hearings that ensued, the charges were dismissed.

Those events had identified Gairy more clearly than ever as a tool of the British colonizers, while Bishop and Whiteman stood out as courageous defenders of the people's rights, and champions of the colonized. The news was carried all over the island, that a new and worthy champion had arisen. The young and fearless Bishop, with his eloquence and his charisma, had emerged at a time when over two decades of Gairyism had left Grenadians from all walks of life, and the working class in particular, feeling smaller-than-life. Everyone and everything that Gairy touched seemed to become tarnished.

Through his exemplary words and deeds, Bishop began to give to Grenadians a new and heroic image of themselves even though he was by no means the only emerging leader. There were layers upon layers of others. There was, for example, Unison Whiteman, that soft-spoken hard-as-steel fighter who had helped to weld MAP and Jewel together with patience, skill and an unerring political foresight. He was the perfect foil for the dashing, charismatic Bishop. From the very beginning, he knew and accepted the fact that he could never hope to be the kind of charismatic front-runner that Bishop was, but he

was a perfect organization man and knew exactly when to come forward and when to fade into the background. Sustained by the slowly mounting tide of the peoples's support, the NJM began to publish a series of political, social and economic blueprints for transforming Grenadian society. These called for the implementation of land reforms; the establishment of agro-industries, free education, a national health insurance scheme, medical and allied health services, a new kind of tourism, the nationalization of banks, a government-owned national insurance company; and in an NJM manifesto, a trumpet call was made for an end to 'tribal' two-party systems and the establishment of Peoples' Assemblies as the political structure that would ensure participatory democracy and the permanent involvement of all the people in decision-making.

The momentum of this thrust for fundamental social, political and structural changes in Grenadian society by the NJM, was maintained with a May 6th Peoples' Convention on Independence. Twenty thousand Grenadians flocked to Seamoond to attend that conference. The NJM leadership made it clear to the people that they did not oppose a genuine independence, but what they wanted to avoid was a charade in which an anthem, a flag and a color on the map would usher in an era of neo-colonialism; they called for creative independence projects and not expensive and meaningless celebrations; (and there, some influence from the Black Power Movement emerged, because this was a popular demand made by the Black Panther Party and its different allied groups and factions), they called for negotiations with the British Government to deal with the issue of partial reparations for the incalculable wealth taken out of Grenada during three centuries of colonial rule. That was, in fact, a perfectly logical demand to make since slavery and Grenadian exports of coffee, cotton, indigo, tobacco, sugar, cocoa, nutmegs and other spices had added billions to the British coffers.

Faced with a rising tide of protest, Gairy vacillated between going into retreat, intensifying his obeiah seances, boasting, praying, making oracular pronouncements about the Bermuda Triangle and unidentified flying objects, and unleashing his Mongoose Gang killers against innocents and NJM activists alike. It was as though he was bent on acting out his own version of an Emperor Jones sequence. There is a certain irony to this since it has recently come to light that Henri Christophe, on whose life story O'Neill based his play, was ori-

ginally a Grenadian. Christophe's master migrated to Haiti after the British took over in Grenada.

On Sunday, April 22nd, Jeremiah Richardson was murdered by the secret police. The demonstration against this foul assassination shut down Pearl's Airport the following day, but the police opened fire on the unarmed crowd and wounded a dozen men, women and children.<sup>4</sup> On Monday April 30th, Matthew Joseph, a NJM supporter, was shot by the police; on May 26th, Hamilton, a NJM activist was badly beaten up by the police and Goodrich Antoine was mauled and brutalized by the Mongoose Gang. Gairy, returning from independence talks in London, was met by demonstrators who the secret police fell upon with a will; on May 28th, Leonard Greenidge, a NJM activist was attacked and badly beaten by the Mongoose Gang on the Esplanade; on June 1st, Alston Williams was cut down with a machete by the secret police while he was selling the NJM newspaper; on June 9th, Clarence Ferguson was beaten and chopped up by the Mongoose Gang, while his daughter, a high school student, was stripped naked and ridiculed in public.

Support for the NJM continued to grow apace. What a courageous people Grenadians are! The NJM held a Peoples Congress in the Seamount Stadium on November 4th. Over twenty thousand people defied the massive Gairyite police and military show of force in order to attend, 27 charges were read aloud against the Gairyite government, and the people responded to each charge with a thunderous chorus of "Guilty!"

Three hundred and nineteen years after Carib warriors had fought breast to breast against the French at Seamount, a new epic drama was being played out. Kaierouanne had leaped to his death shouting "I will rise again!" and it was as though his prophecy was being fulfilled and his promise kept at that November 18th Congress. It is important to record those charges since they might have to be levelled at other oppressors of the heroic Grenadian people. Here is the full text of that historic indictment:

Whereas a government can only rule with the  
consent of the people

AND WHEREAS a Government is the servant

(and not the master) of the people and is under a moral duty to carry out the wishes of the people

AND WHEREAS the People elect a Government to provide them with material benefits and to improve the quality of their lives AND WHEREAS the PEOPLE expect to live free of fear, hunger, misery and exploitation

AND WHEREAS the PEOPLE have a sacred right to work in order to feed, themselves and their children, house and clothe themselves and obtain proper, adequate and cheap medical attention

AND WHEREAS the PEOPLE are always entitled to withdraw their consent and to remove a Government when it becomes clear that the Government is unable or unwilling to carry out their minimum wishes and supply them with their basic demands

AND WHEREAS the present Government of Grenada has demonstrated beyond any reasonable doubt both its unwillingness and its inability to carry out the wishes of the people; many of which were stated in the Manifesto issued by the party of the Government in the last elections

AND WHEREAS conclusive proof of the inability and unwillingness of this Government to carry out its mandate to govern us according to our wishes and instructions is provided by the following MAJOR CRIMES COMMITTED by the Government against the people to wit:

- 1) The Gairy Government encouraged and openly condoned the murders of our citizens: viz Bro. Jerry Richardson, Bro. Cummings, Bro. Lester

Richardson and Bro. Alister Saunders among others.

- 2) The Gairy Government ordered or condoned the shooting of the ten peaceful and unarmed demonstrators who were protesting the murder of Jerry Richardson by a member of the Police Force.
- 3) The Gairy Government has been carrying out its plan to rule the people by fear thus hiring known criminals to brutalize people who are bold enough to oppose its corrupt Government.
- 4) The Gairy Government has been using the method of malicious arrests and arbitrary searches as a means of provoking and harassing opponents of its criminal Government in an attempt to stifle dissent.
- 5) The Gairy Government has squandered and continues to squander the people's money on dream projects employing political Civil Servants and squandering millions on unnecessary travel, arms and secret police while people are 'ketching hell' to make a living.
- 6) The Gairy Government has abused our laws in seizing the people's co-operatives viz: the Banana Co-operative and the Cocoa Association.
- 7) The Gairy Government confiscated the people's Radio Station, and turned it into a propaganda machine for its personal satisfaction and glorification.
- 8) The Gairy Government has not accounted for the spending of People's money in the G.M. & M.W.U. from 1951 to date.

9) The Gairy Government must answer for the arbitrary dismissal of the brave and gallant nurses who protested against the appalling conditions which obtained at the General Hospital in 1970.

10) The Gairy Government victimized hundreds of persons in the Police, Civil Service, Estates, and among citizens generally since 1967 when it resumed office.

11) The Gairy Government has destroyed the Police Force, and turned it into a band of Legalized Criminals. It is Gairy who has sent known criminals to associate with the Police, to spy on them, and commit acts to belittle and embarrass them.

12) The Gairy Government destroyed Agriculture in the State. It did so by the acquisition (through spite) of highly productive estates and cutting them up into land for the landless scandal. It destroyed our Agricultural Stations, and Westerhall Farm bears testimony to this.

13) The Gairy Government has sold out all Government lands and buildings. Quarantine Station is gone. Even the Mental Hospital and Alms House lands are up for sale.

14) The Gairy Government has destroyed our Hospitals, and has endangered our health and lives with poor medical facilities; Doctors are now afraid to remain in Grenada. There are no resident doctors in Carriacou, St. David's and Gouyave.

15) The Gairy Government has acquired people's property in an effort to deprive political opponents of their livelihood.

- 16) The Gairy Government has refused to hold public enquiries into the wanton shooting of our citizens, and into other national disasters such as the sinking of the city of St. George's and into conditions in the Police Force, Civil Service and Prisons.
- 17) The Gairy Government has destroyed our roads. Our main roads are deplorable. Feeder roads can not be remembered.
- 18) The Gairy Government has conspired with Brownlow and others to take away people's rights to LaSagesse and other beaches.
- 19) The Gairy Government has refused to pay its dues to Secondary Schools and the Universities. It has insulted youth by demonstrating that secret police came before youth.
- 20) The Gairy Government has transformed our democracy into ruthless one-man dictatorship. The entire country is now run as his private estate.
- 21) The Gairy Government has shown its complete contempt of and disregard for the people's wishes by its approach to the question of Independence.
- 22) The Gairy Government has enriched itself among other ways by taking bubul<sup>s</sup> salaries for the entire clique.
- 23) The Gairy Government has done nothing to reduce the scandalously high cost of living and by its policy of raising taxes on the essential foods and other items like rice, flour and kerosine, it has increased the level of poverty in the island.

24) The Gairy Government has increasingly been giving away our best lands to foreigners.

25) The Gairy Government was BORN IN BLOOD, BAPTISED IN FIRE, CHRISTENED WITH BULLETS, IS MARRIED TO FOREIGNERS AND IS RESULTING IN DEATH TO THE PEOPLE.

26) The Gairy Government has made no effort to provide us with a sense of direction and a worthwhile sense of values.

27) The Gairy Government has consistently neglected throughout its years in office from 1951 onwards, the basic needs of the people for decent housing, adequate clothing, reliable transport, cheap and high quality medical facilities, a better quality of education for all our children, the development (instead of destruction) of our Agriculture for us to feed all our people and the denial of the opportunity to work and earn a livelihood of over half of the people. These are the gravest crimes of which any government can stand accused and be proved guilty.

AND WHEREAS, the people of Grenada have now decided that for the reasons given above we must decide on the best course of action now open to us to save Grenada.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that a Congress of the People meeting at Seamount on the 4th day of November 1973 has democratically and collectively agreed to take the following actions:

- a) To pass a verdict of guilty on the charges laid against this Government and to condemn this Government for irresponsibility, corruption, incompetence, inefficiency, breach of contract, and to pass a vote of no confidence in the Government.
- b) To call upon this Government to resign with effect from 18th November, 1973.
- c) To appoint a National Unity Council from among persons present at this Congress charged with the responsibility of implementing the decision taken at the Congress to remove this Government from office and to constitute to a provisional government of the people pending the call of New Elections by the Governor to elect a new popular Government,
  - (a) To agree to use the New Jewel's Manifesto for power to the People as the basis of a new plan that the new Government will operate to run the country.

**AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT COPIES OF THIS Resolution of the PEOPLE'S WILL be forwarded to the Governor, Premier and Cabinet as official notice of our decisions taken today.<sup>6</sup>**

The essentially moderate proposals for peaceful and constitutional changes implicit in that indictment, only succeeded in goading Gairy to commit further atrocities. The NJM announced that a general strike would be called if Gairy failed to resign. The flustered Gairy declared, "This is trash! The damage these people have done at home and abroad to our country and our people is irreparable, and perhaps unpardonable."<sup>7</sup> The dictator turned Sunday, November 18th into a day of blood. On the other hand, it became to those Grenadians who were still sitting on the fence, a call to arms. November 18th be-

came known as 'Bloody Sunday'. A calypso commemorated this day with the lyrics:

Bloody Sunday we shall never forget  
When the rabid mongoose escape from their  
net . . .<sup>8</sup>

Here is an eyewitness account of how the NJM leadership was pushed close to death's door and miraculously remained alive to continue fighting:

On that Sunday morning, Comrade Hudson Austin came by my home and told me that Grenville businessman H M Bhola, would like the NJM to meet with the businessmen in Grenville to explain in a detailed way the nature of the general shut-down which was supposed to take place the following day, the Monday, 19 November 1973. It was on that basis that we agreed that all of us – Comrades Bishop, Radix, Whiteman, Austin, Daniel and myself – should go up in the afternoon. The meeting was organised by Bhola and was due to take place at the De Luxe Cinema in Grenville.

At around one o'clock that Sunday, we all gathered at Comrade Bishop's home to hold a final discussion on the content of the meeting so that there would be no doubt after we finished the meeting on how things would go the following day. We used three cars to go to Grenville. Whilst we were preparing to leave from Comrade Bishop's home, there were quite a few secret police and regular police outside waiting to follow us. We had to dodge and escape from them, and were able to lose sight of them after a while. We got into Grenville between 2.30 and 3.00 pm, and when we arrived at the scene where the meeting was supposed to be held, the De Luxe Cinema, we were confronted by plain-clothes policemen and secret police fully armed with pickaxe handles.

We could not have entered the yard because it was taken over by dozens of secret police and plain-clothes policemen who were more or less leading the operation. Bhola, who was on the scene, suggested to us that we should transfer the meeting to his home. We agreed to that because we were prepared to avoid the confrontation. Whilst we were at his home waiting for the other businessmen to arrive, and discussing what we have just encountered at the cinema, Comrade Daniel walked across to one of the shops, but had to rush back after the secret police he had met there started to threaten him.

Suddenly, more and more secret police began to gather up and encircle the place. After that had reached a certain level, Inspector Innocent Belmar suddenly arrived on the scene, got out of the car and ordered his secret police to get us. His exact words were: 'Get them dogs!' He also fired off a couple of bullets. Comrades Radix, Austin and Daniel were able to make a quick dash upstairs and escape the secret police. Comrades Bishop, Whiteman and I were further away from the steps and were unable to make a quick escape from the secret police using the same route, but had to go around the building trying to escape from them. Whilst the three of us were hiding from them behind a piece of wall, they started to fire at us, with bullets flying on the sides and over our heads. We think it was because they were not properly trained that they did not penetrate us with bullets. As soon as we got out from behind the wall, they converged on us immediately, beating us from there into the streets, and separated us from each other. We did not see each other again until hours later in the cell in the Grenville Police Station.

We were beaten unconscious, fell, regained consciousness, fell again and were then dragged

through the streets by the secret police into the police station. There the plain-clothes and secret policemen were ordered to shave us and collect the blood that was flowing from our bodies. They actually threatened us to drink the blood which they collected. All three of us were there, bleeding in the cell because they had shaved us with broken bottles and the blood continued to flow from our bodies. The other three comrades were also shaved and thrown in the cell with us.

Throughout the night we were tortured by Belmar and the secret police who had taken over from the plain-clothes policemen. From time to time, Belmar would come and order us to get up and sit down, under much pain. I could recall that Comrade Austin had Comrade Bishop in his lap, bleeding profusely. The underpants Comrade Austin was wearing changed colour from white to red. It was a night of terror.

Next morning, we were handcuffed and taken to a Grenville magistrate's court where we were charged with attempting to overthrow the régime. Magistrate I Duncan, on the orders of Gairy, sent us to jail.

At the prison, for the first time since our beating, we saw a doctor. So we are talking about more than a day later. He sent us immediately to hospital.

The people were outraged by this barbarous act of the Gairy dictatorship and were annoyed that such treatment was meted out to the party's leadership. That incident sparked off the mass democratic protest that took place in the ensuing months, when people from all walks of life were calling upon Gairy to resign. From that brutal incident, the people never turned back.<sup>9</sup>

Gairy seemed bent on removing every possibility of a peaceful transition to a popular democratic government. He was certain that the British would hand him the instruments of independence on

a platter regardless of what the majority of Grenadians thought of him and his grotesquely tyrannical regime. The 1974 pre-independence election was turned into a perverse political soap opera. But, despite the rigging of votes and the manipulation of the entire apparatus of state power to penalize the NJM, that party, having won three seats, became the official opposition in the legislature. Whiteman was expelled from that august body for repeatedly making derisory and irreverent comments about Gairy and Gairyism. From that legislative platform, which they had reached at the cost of so much blood, the NJM leaders were not only discrediting Gairy more effectively than they had already done in the eyes of the Grenadians, but were constantly spelling out programs for the new Grenada that they were certain would emerge from the debris of Gairyism. The British did what one Grenadian wag described as a 'Pontius Pilate flit', they washed their hands of the whole sordid business of which they had been so much a part, and left their errant pupil to his own devices.

At this point, it is necessary to allow the murdered Bishop to speak from the grave. In the following statement, he answers many questions and makes a mockery of those who are now using hindsight to speak for him. In answer to a question put to him by Chris Searle about the lessons learnt fighting the Gairy tyranny, he said.

What we learned from our experiences in the struggle against the dictator has proved to be very critical in many respects. Firstly, of course, it deepened our organizational skill and ability and gave us a tremendous experience in fighting in underground situations. We had to produce our newspaper, for example, in clandestine conditions, which meant that every single week we had to go to some new venue in order to print it, and thereafter our network of distributors had to sell the newspaper, without being caught by the Gairy repressive apparatus. This was the invaluable kind of organizational ability we had to develop from underground in the building of our party. We had to hold our meetings while the dictatorship was searching for us, and this served to force us to develop a strong sense of

security and to build firm alliances with the people of our country coming from many different classes and strata. Very often we had to hold meetings in houses that would be unlikely to attract attention. That whole experience certainly helped us in our subsequent policy of building a concrete alliance to fight the 1976 elections, and it continues to help us today in pursuing a policy of alliances with sections of the upper petite-bourgeoisie in our country, and even the bourgeoisie, as part of our overall policy of socialist orientation.

It also helped to steel our comrades, helped to make them much, much more disciplined, helped to ensure that once they were given tasks then they would carry them out, because in situations that we faced it was absolutely critical to be dead certain that everybody was actually doing what he or she had promised to do. And this was linked to the necessity of collective leadership. We found from our very hard experience that the repression was so constant and consistent, that at any given time any number of our people might be arrested or charged or jailed, or sometimes, and this happened quite frequently, beaten, and therefore unavailable. So this made it necessary for us to build a strong collective leadership . . .<sup>10</sup>

Bishop's eloquent statement refutes unequivocally those self-serving charges of one-manism levelled at him by political novices on the NJM'S Central Committee. He explains how collective leadership was an intrinsic part of the NJM from its very inception; it was woven into the warp and woof of the party's organizational fabric by necessity and not as some kind of academic canon; and from the very beginning, the Party had also successfully taken the people completely into its confidence, and at the same time maintained the utmost secrecy as far as the dictatorship was concerned. With spies everywhere and the repressive forces sniffing out NJM activists like bloodhounds, thousands of freedom fighters had been mobilized and tra-

ned by that party to overthrow the dictatorship. The security network of the NJM could not be penetrated by Gairy's spies because the overwhelming majority of the Grenadian people were behind Bishop, Whiteman, Louison and other leaders. With Bishop at the helm, it was the most dedicated and incorruptible leadership Grenada had known since the Fedon revolt and new recruits were constantly joining its ranks.

The Gairyite security forces kept on adding new names to the list of martyrs. On June 19th, 1977, Alister Strachan was murdered by the police. This occurred at the very time that a meeting of the Organization of American States was taking place in St. George's. Gairy had invited that inter-American body to meet in Grenada in order to enhance his own waning prestige, and the OAS had obliged. Cyrus Vance, President Carter's Secretary of State, was the featured guest. While the OAS delegates were making their diplomatic pronouncements at different sessions inside the Dome, (a new and costly structure built specially for the occasion), the NJM was holding its own meeting in the market square to call attention to the tyrannical nature of the Gairy government. The Gairy police fell upon those attending that meeting with an unbridled fury. Alistair Strachan, an NJM activist dived into the sea and swam away to escape the dictator's gunmen. A hail of bullets pursued him. Later, his corpse was washed ashore. The US media was well represented at that June, 1977 OAS meeting in St. George's. However, one searches through newspaper columns in vain for the profound concern about human rights in Gairy's Grenada that was later to manifest itself so stridently when the Peoples Revolutionary Government of Bishop took over. One can just imagine the kind of plastic and vociferous indignation that would have crackled through the columns of the leading US newspapers if the police of the PRG had broken up a meeting in the market square and murdered a demonstrator while an international conference was being held in St. George's.

The next US Secretary of State to visit Grenada would be George Shultz. He paid his proconsular visit in February 1984 in the wake of the illegal US invasion of that island, to give his approval and blessing to the first US attempt at re-colonization in the English-speaking Caribbean. Shultz, President Reagan's Secretary of State, was quoted as saying that Grenada was a "delicious" piece of real estate, and Du

Parquet, Governon Melville and many other colonial proconsuls long since dead, would have agreed with him.

Other martyrs who joined the long list of Gairyite victims were Iri Bishop, an Inspector of Police in Carriacou and four goatherds who used to take their flocks to graze on the uninhabited Frigate Island. Iri Bishop had been repeatedly threatened by Gairy's thugs because he refused to go along with those whom he felt were dishonoring their uniforms. He preferred death to dishonor. The four lads tending their goats on Frigate Island were victims of Gairyite robbers who coveted their herds.

Each new martyr strengthened the resolve of the NJM cadres to bring Gairy down. Grenada was, at the time of the NJM's rise to power, and remains a society of youths; the average age of the population as a whole is under eighteen. But not only that youthful majority, but all sections of the population began to support the NJM. During the last five years of the Gairy regime, the NJM was particularly successful in winning considerable support inside the urban Trade Unions. Gairy considered this the most serious threat of all to his base of power. It was through his GMMWU that he had risen to be premier. He had then consolidated his hold on the nation and become the first Prime Minister of an independent Grenada. When the Bank and General Workers Union came into being late in 1978 with Vincent Noel as its leader, Gairy began planning to physically eliminate Noel and the rest of the NJM leadership.

It is fortunate that scholar activists like Richard Hart and Chris Searle, in the midst of performing a plethora of official duties for the PRG, had the presence of mind to record oral accounts, to collect invaluable official data, and to patiently piece together bits of information about the Grenadian Revolution for posterity. In Hart's scholarly writings one is left with the unmistakable impression that here is a man who is both absolutely committed to the struggle of the West Indian people and equally committed to truth. Searle's historical accounts are somewhat unique. The methodology he uses is a simple one: he records the history of events as they are seen through the eyes of the people; he remains unobtrusively in the background while the history-makers – the people and their leaders – speak for themselves. Some of the key figures who spoke to Searle are now dead, but his patient research efforts enable them to continue speaking through his writings to us. Searle's historical writings, therefore, are based on the

correct assumption that the movers and shakers of Grenadian history came out of ontological systems in which the oral tradition is still the dominant one; and until that tradition evolves to another stage, much of the best primary material will continue to be stored in the archives of the people's minds and memories; and unless the fragmentary official records are supplemented by a great volume of oral testimony, we can find ourselves left with distortions of the truth, speculations, fantasy and suppositions based on racial, political, class, caste, and, more often than not, religious biases.

Searle, after talking to both the NJM leaders and rank and file members, touches on three important events that took place on the eve of the revolution.<sup>11</sup>

- 1) The Barclay's bank workers who had been recruited as members of Vincent Noel's Bank and General Workers Union, demanded union recognition and an end to the bank's racist practices in employment and its discriminatory and insulting treatment of employees with dark skins. All foreign-owned banks in Grenada had made racial discrimination an organic part of their hiring policies and their banking practices since they were first established. When Gairy joined forces to block recognition of the new union and jail Noel, the middle and commercial classes came out openly in support of the NJM and the bank workers who went on strike from February to early March. The dictator, sensing that power was slipping from his tyrannical grasp, began acting like a swimmer whom excessive fatigue had robbed of both his coordination and his sense of direction.
- 2) On March 10th, word reached the NJM leaders from supporters in the police force that Gairy was about to arrest them, and that he had already prepared underground cells for their incarceration. They went into hiding with the whole nation as their protectors.
- 3) On March 12th, Gairy left for New York to lecture United Nation delegates on the alleged dangers of unidentified flying objects. Afterwards, it was rumoured that one of his chief consulting obeah men had recommended that he take the trip. On his way to New York, the dictator stopped off in Barbados for consultations with the American Ambassador Frank Ortiz. He then flew north with a sense of satisfaction that he had consulted deities at both ends of the obeah spectrum

- an agent of magic and an imperialist agent of might. But Gairy had failed to consult the most important entity of all - the Grenadian people. He had, however, before departing, left word with his security forces that the leadership the people had chosen - six prominent NJM stalwarts - should be summarily assassinated. The names of Bishop, Whiteman and Coard headed the list.

# CHAPTER NINETEEN

## BALLAD FOR A REVOLUTION

*Grenada,  
spice island to the windward  
of the rising sun  
Kaierouanne kept his word  
the thunder-axe has struck a hammer-blow  
that echoing across an archipelago  
where dreams were curbed and chained and lashed  
and ancestors carried empires on their backs  
Grenada,  
Kaierouanne, Bishop and Fedon are dancing  
to bongo beats of liberation drums  
Caonabo's singing a poem-hymn,  
Anacona's shouting defiance  
at conquistadors  
Fidel's repeating his prophecy  
that when there's stirring of a peoples' ire  
tyrants go to sleep in power  
and wake up in exile . . .*

The sun always seems to rise reluctantly in Grenada. First, there is fore-day morning, when the workers and peasants grope around to light lanterns, and if the electricity is working, to switch on lights. From the West coast and along the spine of the island facing the sea, day-clean then begins and the lightening sky tells you what kind of weather you can expect – sunshine or rain. If there are darkening clouds, you listen to the wind and it tells you which direction the rain will come from. If there is an absence of clouds, then the morning hours will be filled with a blaze of sunlight. On the Eastern shores of the island, you wait for the sun to burst over the peaks of the hills like a familiar visitor who is forever able to surprise you:

When foreday-morning was changing into day-clean on March 13, fifty NJM freedom fighters stormed the True Blue barracks where Gairy's Green Beast army was garrisoned. Those Gairyite soldiers trained by Pinochet's goons were taken completely by surprise, and they displayed very little enthusiasm for dying in the defense of the dictatorship. Dazed, frightened, and many of them still in their underwear, they trouped out and surrendered. The freedom fighters then moved on to capture the radio station at Morne Rouge. With the radio station in their hands, they began calling on the people to support the insurrection, to take up whatever arms were at hand and to ensure that every police station in the nation was in their hands. Spontaneously, the people organized themselves. Their discipline was astonishing. The most dramatic scenes of the revolution were unrehearsed. With the police pointing their guns at the crowd surrounding a station, a woman stepped forward and ordered them to surrender in the name of the people. When they hesitated, she advanced boldly and took the gun from the trembling hands of a young policeman, and the others laid theirs aside. She marched her prisoners out amidst cheers from the crowd. When a man tried to punch one of the prisoners, she cited him,

"We didn't come this long, long way, put up with all that misery, to act like they acted."

A stray shot killed one man. He and the Gairy dictatorship were the twin casualties of the revolution.

Bishop spoke to The Grenadian people over Radio on the morning of March 13th. It was a sober speech. It was as though he wanted to tell his people at that moment of triumph that ahead of them were many other battles to be fought and won. There were echoes of his historic 1973 indictment of the Gairy dictatorship at the Seamoan Congress of the people when he declared,

This revolution is for work, for food, for decent housing and health services, and for a bright future for our children and grandchildren!<sup>1</sup>

Grenadians have an aversion to heroic posturing, and years later, they would still tell amusing stories about the March 13th uprising. If they spoke about the heroes and heroines of that great event, they did so with modesty and a touch of humour. There was a story going the

rounds about the leader of a group of freedom fighters who had worked out every possible avenue of retreat, but he had forgotten to design a strategy for attack. The population which had been brutalized for a quarter of a century by Gairy's security forces – the police, the "green-beast army", the Mongoose Squad – acted with dignity and compassion when those enemies fell into their hands: they allowed their People's Revolutionary Government to deal with those who were accused of committing crimes against them. The guns used by the freedom fighters had been purchased in New York and shipped down to Grenada secretly. Guns are one of the most readily available commodities in the United States. There are 1.2 guns for every man, woman and child in that country, and this does not include the official arsenals of the armed forces.

On that March 13th day of victory, too, the things that Bishop had left unsaid resonated just as loudly as his sober declarations to the people. One could almost have heard him wondering aloud about what steps the British and American imperialists would take to frustrate the will of his joyous people; to push them back on their knees and to sully their pristine dream of liberation. Bishop and the Grenadian people did not have to wait very long for answers to his unspoken speculations. Frank Ortiz, the United States Ambassador to the Eastern Caribbean, who had received Gairy so cordially when he was on his way to entertain United Nations delegates with pulp magazine stories about UFO's, was obviously caught completely by surprise by the Grenadian Revolution. Gairy had, no doubt, reassured him that all was well. It is astonishing how often the United States government is taken by 'surprise' when events like the Grenadian revolution occur. It is either that the US government has an infinite capacity to be taken by surprise or that, with the National Security Agency receiving 50 million pieces of information every month, there is a widening gap between the quantity of information received and the quality of analysis. Ambassador Ortiz, who had never even given Gairy a diplomatic slap on the wrist for his crimes against the Grenadian people, sent an insulting note to Bishop saying that the Carter Administration would not look kindly upon any attempt by the PRG to establish any kind of diplomatic or other relationship with Cuba. With a typical knee-jerk reaction, the United States "publicly accused Cuba of instigating and assisting"<sup>2</sup> in the overthrow of Gairy.

How could serious officials of any government noise such fictions

abroad and base its policies upon such spurious suppositions? One might well ask. Professor Linus Hoskins in his "U.S.-Caribbean-Grenada Relations: Before and After Bishop," pointed out that,

A confidential CIA report dismissed that accusation and concluded that "as far as we can tell, the coup occurred . . . from local circumstances. The Soviets had nothing to do with it or the Cubans either."<sup>3</sup>

Ortiz, apparently, as part of a golden handshake to ensure that Bishop would not incur the "grave displeasure" of the Carter administration, offered the magnanimous largesse of \$4,000 dollars in aid to Grenada.

Prime Minister Bishop took the matter directly to the Grenadian people. In a radio broadcast, he said,

... No one, no matter how mighty and powerful they are will be permitted to dictate to the government of Grenada who we can be friendly with and what kind of friendly relations we must have with other countries . . .<sup>4</sup>

\* \* \*

"History always repeats itself," Marx wrote, "The first time is tragedy, and the next farce." In 1739, Great Britain went to war with Spain using as a pretext a sailor's loss of his ear. Robert Jenkins, the sea dog in question, because he was caught smuggling, was sentenced by a Spanish official in Cuba named Sandino, to have his ear cut off. The British then claimed that Jenkins was one of several of their citizens upon whom atrocities had been committed by the Spanish. They send Admiral Vernon with a powerful fleet and a large compliment of troops to settle scores with their weaker rival. That sordid imperial adventure inspired by a lust for profits and an atavistic impulse to flex naval and military muscle was a tragedy which left many homeless, bereaved and indeed, dead. It is now known as "The War of Jenkins Ear". There have been many repeat performances since then, no-

teable examples being the "Opium War" which was waged by the British against a divided and enfeebled China, and the „Gulf of Tonkin Incident" when a provocation instigated by U.S. naval and air forces was used as an excuse to start large scale bombing of North Viet Nam. And as though these farcical, mendacious and deadly acts of international bullying have a life of their own, a new and familiar drama has begun to unfold. As the prologue to Act One, Scene One, the U.S. Government and its loyal supporters in the media are making a concerted effort to demonize the Nicaraguan people and their leaders. Then Act I, itself, began to unfold. The day after the November 6, 1984 Presidential elections and the victory of Ronald Reagan, an anxious world was threatened with a "War of the Vanishing Soviet Crates".

With a supreme absence of logic and a disregard for both international law and international sensibilities and concern, the **New York Times** of Sunday November 11 informed its readers that: "Administration officials said today there was never more than circumstantial evidence that fighter planes were aboard the Soviet freighter that reached Cortino on Wednesday . . . Nevertheless, when the freighter was spotted heading towards Nicaragua word was passed to news organizations that it might deliver warplanes." Those splendid news organizations then doctored the statement by changing the words "might deliver" to "were delivering", and they began drumming up jingoistic irrelevancies about the "Monroe Doctrine" and Nicaragua's alleged "threat" to its neighbours. What was deliberately omitted in those reports was that U.S. Southern Command forces were on full alert; that there were fifteen U.S. Warships outside Nicaraguan waters with enough bombs and fire power to blow up all of the habitable areas of Central and South America; that the U.S. had, unjustifiably, cut off all significant trade with Nicaragua and was financing and stage managing through the C.I.A., murderous attacks upon the Nicaraguan people; that the Soviet Union and Nicaragua were two sovereign nations and the question of trade between them was entirely their own affair.

The "crisis" has since been removed from the headlines and, no doubt, new provocations are being hatched against the Sandinista Government. What form will the new display of atavism and international bullying take?

Grenada, which was invaded by U.S. forces in October 1983 with

the same flagrant disregard for even a rudimentary form of international morality as the British had displayed in "The War of Jenkins Ear" or their "Opium War" or that the U.S. had shown in their "Gulf of Tonkin Incident", is being swept under the carpet. The suffering of the Grenadian people, and the continued occupation of that island by U.S. troops are being ignored. The U.S. news organizations have touted that atrocious invasion as a "victory" and readers have been reassured that 90% of the Grenadian people were in favor of that invasion.

One of the Directors of the Chicago-based Black Press Institute who travelled extensively in Europe during the summer of 1984, wrote in **New Deliberations** the journal of the BPI,

The question asked by people from all walks of life and covering the political spectrum from left to right was, "How can the American people keep voting for a leader who was so cavalier about the fate of the earth?" and, "Didn't the joke about abolishing the Soviet Union cause a tremor to shake the whole nation's conscience, and if not their consciences, then certainly it must have touched upon their fears for the continued existence of our planet?

After making valiant attempts to answer those questions in London, Prague, Berlin, Pisa, Milan, Verona, Brescia, Venice, Hamburg, Vienna and other cities, the BPI correspondent fell back upon analysing, for the benefit of the questioners, the all-pervasive phenomenon of the U.S. media bombarding the public with images instead of ideas. And further, how the U.S. public is bombarded with personalities instead of valid national concerns and international policies, with non-issues rather than issues, and with a welter of irrelevancies instead of the urgent and universal concern with war or peace, of leading and not impeding. In Prague, the questions asked were serious, searching and tinged with urgency.

\* \* \*

After the U.S. defeat in Viet Nam, the Pentagon planners have de-

cided that they should never again involve the country in a war that is unpopular with the majority of Americans. The Grenadian invasion was short, brutal and the Grenadian forces were outnumbered by fifteen to one. In addition, for the first time in the history of the many foreign wars the U.S. had fought, the press was excluded. The U.S. public was fed fictions churned out by Press Officers in the military and they believed spurious justifications which the rest of the world treated with a mixture of derision and disbelief. New plans for other adventures in aggression have already been hatched in the hope that these can be Grenadianized. Nicaragua now heads the hit list but there are also contingency plans for the invasion of Cuba, Libya, Iran and Syria.

A retired U.S. Ambassador had told a select audience in Atlanta in November 1984,

If the public only knew a fragment of the contingency plans for aggression that have been prepared at great cost by our rulers . . . and these plans are predicated on the illusion that we are already involved in a Third World War – they would be even more alarmed and frightened about the future of their children and grand-children than I am for mine.

Reagan's talk about an Armageddon is not the ranting of an old man, it is part of a national policy of playing chicken with the fate of our planet. I have seen with my own two eyes plans for the invasion of Nicaragua, the bombing and invasion of Cuba . . . When Jesse Jackson went to Syria and brought Lieutenant Goodman out, the invasion of Syria was already imminent . . . along with the plans for these invasions are the variety of pretexts that could be trumped up to justify them to the U.S. public. Sometimes, when I find it difficult to sleep at nights thinking about these nightmarish portends, I begin to tell myself that the best thing to do would be to find some hideout in the middle of the Amazon Basin and live out

the rest of my days there . . . because out there,  
my life could most likely be longer than the life  
of our civilization as we know it.

But in order to enact one of the above grisly scenarios the Pentagon hawks must first make sure that whole countries and their leaders are seen as implacable adversaries by the majority of Americans. The "evil empire" concept propounded with such fervor by President Reagan is part and parcel of a grand design to demonize nations and their leaders, and to create a dangerously simplistic world-view that fits more into fictionalized and historically false conflicts between cowboys and Indians than about the East/West conflict. In the real world, there are an infinite variety of choices between the absolutes of communism and free enterprise capitalism. The alleged Soviet presence in Central America is very much like the phantom on the stairs in this little ditty:

*As I was going up the stairs  
I met a man who wasn't there  
He wasn't there again today  
I wish that man would go away.*

But it had been the very Alexander Haig who was mentioned earlier as being one of the leaders of the Pentagon hawks, who had sat in on the initial planning sessions for the Grenadian invasion. He has now been kicked upstairs to the corporate boardrooms of United Technologies Inc. and has published his memoirs in a fat volume distinguished more for its prolixity and the density of the prose than for what it reveals about the petty squabbles in the corridors of power in the Reagan White House. Haig's prose is so full of obfuscations that one needs first to translate it into basic English in order to excavate the cliched right wing ideas that he expresses so ponderously.

The U.S. media has a way of using terms so often that their original meaning becomes transformed into slick cliches. The "information revolution" or the "technological revolution" are shining examples. The term "information revolution" has become a metaphor for the way in which cheap, computerized and packaged information can be used like a commodity. Depending on who controls this commodity, it can be used either to inform or to disinform. For example, Presi-

dent Reagan's media experts did a brilliant job of programming him for a second term. Despite his warmongering, his assaults upon the civil rights of millions of Americans, his disregard for human rights in pariah regimes like the South African or the Chilean ones, his creation of permanent layers of the destitute, his bid to deny those who retired after sixty-five their social security benefits, his attempts to make higher education a prerogative of the rich and his thinly-disguised racism and sexism, he was swept back into the White House with a 60% popular vote.

It is as though George Orwell in his novel **1984** had written the script for the Reagan repeat performance. This "information revolution" is one whose control mechanisms are falling into the hands of fewer and fewer people. To paraphrase Churchill, never has so much been controlled packaged and disseminated by so few. The corporate barons who now control and feed vast stores of packaged information to the U.S. public and the rest of the world hope to induce a state of euphoria in a mass of intellectually tranquilized minions who can be convinced that they need not think for themselves any longer since wise, sleepless and ever vigilant information brokers will constantly be doing the thinking for them. Geraldine Ferraro, the Democratic Vice Presidential candidate in the 1984 elections, summed up the situation very aptly when she declared that a media blitz had persuaded the public to vote "for shadows instead of substance, commercials instead of common sense".

What is, in fact, happening, is that those few who are designing and feeding the information to millions of people, hope to make them acquiesce ultimately to atrocities against the peoples of Central America, the Near East, the Caribbean, Latin America, Africa, and then to be led docilely into a thermo-nuclear slaughterhouse in an anti-communist crusade. What one is, therefore, facing is the very real possibility of a computerized fascism. But there are always two sides to a coin, and the left and its liberal allies are using the information technology to counter the assault from the right. The left is divided and its resources, compared to those at the disposal of their opponents, woefully inadequate. But for every one convert the Reaganite right wins, at least three people are likely to be alienated, so those alienated millions must be mobilized and they include the minorities, the old, the unemployed, the poor and women from all walks of life.

Inside the major trade unions, the rank-and-file members are challenging their misleaders to stand up and fight for their rights.

Can America go fascist? That question is being asked by concerned people everywhere one travels. The answer is that US capitalism is in crisis; some of the major industries like steel and automobile manufacturing are being gutted. The "world car", parts of which are made in Mexico, West Germany, Britain, Taiwan, South Korea, South Africa, and Japan and Hong Kong, is replacing the car from Detroit. The Japanese, using raw materials bought in the US, are producing steel more efficiently and cheaply than the US can do in its outmoded plants. The food industry, the number one industry in the US, is penalizing US farmers, Reaganomics is disciplining them in the same way that industrial workers are being disciplined – they must accept a lower standard of living or join the ranks of the destitute. Small businesses are going down like banana trees in a hurricane; bankruptcies were in excess of three hundred thousand in 1983 and 200,000 small-to medium-sized farmers lost their farms in 1984. The default of a major creditor nation can send the US banking system into a tail-spin. The talk of economic recovery is more and more like whistling in the dark. A genuine recovery has to begin at foundations which are being eroded, not in the economic superstructure. The US is responding to its internal and external crises by trying to choke itself to death with armaments. The question then as to whether the US can go fascist or not can only be answered by pointing out a number of facts and leaving the main point unanswered. Nixon had toyed with the idea of a coup d'etat, and had come close enough to setting it in motion. But a series of unpredictable developments thwarted him.

# CHAPTER TWENTY

The People's Revolutionary Government of Grenada (PRG) was established as a result of the successful popular insurrection led by the New Jewel Movement on the 13th of March, 1979. The New Jewel Movement was a Marxist Leninist or vanguard party, but the People's Revolutionary Government an exclusively New Jewel Movement party government. The People'S Revolutionary Government did not envisage a rapid transition to socialism. There's been some misunderstanding on this point and even in one of the collections of Maurice Bishop's speeches the foreword describes it as a socialist revolution – this is inaccurate, unless by that is meant that the governing party ultimately was intending to lead the economy forward to socialism. The People's Revolutionary Government consisted of a number of persons chosen by the revolutionary leadership – deliberately chosen – so as to reflect the fact that it was an alliance between the party representing the working class and a number of patriotic bourgeois and petty bourgeois elements in the society. There were two ministers who were in fact representative of the local capitalist class, Lyden Ramdanny and Norris Bain, businessmen not party members, but nevertheless part of the People's Revolutionary Government in good standing and well respected ministers.

## MIXED ECONOMY

The economic programme envisaged the development of a mixed economy – a state sector, a small co-operative sector (which would expand) and a private sector. The private sector was not only expected but encouraged to grow and develop, though the state sector was seen as the one which would play the leading developmental role in the society. The private sector existed in commerce where it was dominant and indeed the only appreciable penetration of the state sector there was the Marketing and National Import Board.

The importation of fertilizer, a tremendously profitable commodity in an agricultural society, was removed from the private sector by the MNIB which sold fertilizer at very much cheaper rates in order to stimulate agriculture.

In manufacturing there was a small private sector – garments, furniture and beverages. In land ownership there were the big plantations which continued for the most part as before and, of course, a very large number of individual peasant proprietors. Grenada boasted of having one of the highest percentages of private small landowners in the English-speaking Caribbean.

The government policy on land, because there have been so few precedents has led to some misunderstandings. It has been thought that with a revolutionary government in office, there would have been a rapid redistribution of land. The revolution had not in fact reached that stage. Indeed, the People's Revolutionary Government gave some assistance to large owners to maintain their holdings intact.

There was for a time what appeared, at least on the surface, an ultra-left development – a group of people who seized the land, of a big plantation in the River Antoine area and the State operating and reflecting as it did national alliance, stepped in and foiled the seizure. It turned out that the people who were behind the move were in fact not the land hungry peasants they claimed to be at all. The local name for them was the "ganja capitalists" because it turned out that they were opening a ganja export business and they did make a couple of shipments, one to the Bahamas.

However, the state was determined to bring idle land into cultivation and the Land Utilization Law enabled the state to take a compulsory lease of land where the owners were not developing it. This was used partly to put lands into the public sector with the Grenada Farms Corporation – state farms – and partly for use or development in co-operatives, which were not, incidentally, tremendously successful. What should also be mentioned about the policy in regard to land is that any government in Grenada would have been faced with a problem of fragmentation. Grenada has an enormous population living abroad. Many Grenadians return home to retire having saved what they need to live on for the rest of their lives in relative comfort. They think in terms of acquiring land, a small farm and house, something that can very often result in land coming out of market production and moving into subsistence production. In this context, one of Gre-

nada's problems was to maintain market production for export of principal crops and so the Land Utilization Law made it illegal to sell off a hundred or more acres of any property. For that you needed permission of the state. There was a particular case in which the largest banana plantation that was having some difficulties, conceived the idea of raising the necessary capital by selling off to small purchasers an area in excess of a hundred acres. The state stepped in and said "We can't give you permission but having looked at your figures, what we're prepared to do is to guarantee a bank loan which will tide you over the difficulty." The thinking behind this was to avoid fragmentation and therefore keep lands in banana production and keep the export figures up.

The private sector was in banking. The state purchased two of the commercial banks. Those banks had found the Grenada operation least profitable because of the high taxation so the state bought both the Grenada Bank of Commerce and the National Commercial Bank. There was a substantial private sector in tourism and this was to be encouraged under the Investment Code and under the Investment Code Incentives Law which had the responsibility of providing incentives to investment of capital in the development of tourism. This was quite important because the new airport, the principal part of the public sector, would naturally have meant a boom in tourism and the plan was that the private sector would have had a part in this expansion.

## THE PUBLIC SECTOR

The public sector (the primary part of this, of course, was the new airport) and tourism had developed initially on the expropriation of some of the property of the deposed tyrant, Eric Gairy. He had acquired a considerable stake in facilities for tourism, hotels, restaurants and real estate and he had the distinction of being one of the only two people who had their property expropriated by the revolutionary government. Special laws were passed with a preamble which explained that these gains were ill-gotten and were now being recovered for the state without compensation. So, Mr. Gairy and Mr. Derrick Knight, his deputy, had their property expropriated. Other than that, anything acquired by the revolutionary government was acquired under the old colonial public acquisition law, land acquisition law and

another similar laws which provided for the payment of full compensation. The public sector in tourism was quite considerable and it was expanded further when the Holiday Inn had one of its fairly regular if mysterious fires which destroyed a good part of the hotel. The state bought what was left of it and rebuilt it, and it's now the country's largest hotel – the Grenada Beach Hotel, which, ironically is now the headquarters and barracks of the American occupation force.

The Sandino Housing Plant, contributed to the Grenadian by Cuba, was to provide reasonably priced mass housing for low income groups.

The Ramon Quintana Stone Crushing and Asphalt Plant was also important for the road construction programme, and the Cubans who had been so extremely generous in the provision of equipment and labour for the laying of the runway to the new airport, had undertaken that on their departure, they were going to leave the equipment used in laying the runway with the Public Construction Department for use on road building in Grenada. For some reason the American occupation forces thought that they were contributing to democracy by shooting up the engines of much of that equipment though they did use a small part of it.

The Marketing and National Import Board represented another state incursion into commerce. That was designed initially to purchase farmers' crops and a determined effort was being made to get individual farmers as well as the state farms to go over to a system of contracting to supply their produce to the Marketing Board. That proved a little difficult because many of the farmers were not accustomed to the idea of supplying their produce under contract, so it was making slow progress but progress nevertheless. The produce was used both for export and for retailing locally. The MNIB has a retail shop in St. George's and they also imported rice, fertilizers and a few other things designed to keep the prices of the essential goods down.

### A GOVERNMENT FOR THE WORKING CLASS

The People's Revolutionary Government was a national alliance with the bourgeois and petty bourgeois sectors, but obviously, there would be in the course of operation of such an alliance occasions of friction and conflict of interests. In those situations, generally speaking, the state was used in the interests of the workers in a way that

I don't think we could fairly expect to be the case in Jamaica and other neo-colonial territories in the Caribbean. There was for example, a recalcitrant employer at the privately owned Coca Cola plant. The concessionaire refused to abide by a decision of the Labour Department that two workers should be reinstated. So the workers went on strike and the owner decided to close the plant down. He was certain that when the workers had got suitably hungry he might have been able to resolve the matter on terms that he liked. Well, the workers occupied the plant and began to operate it themselves. The state stepped in and provided them with accountancy and banking facilities so as to make sure that nothing went wrong with the proceeds and the cash flow. With this assistance the workers continued to operate the plant profitably until the owner came to his senses, at which point the plant was returned to the concessionaire. This is quite an interesting example because some of the workers thought the arrangement was permanent and were somewhat disappointed that the plant was returned because they thought it had moved into the public sector. However, the arrangement that the People's Revolutionary Government was operating was one in which the state was used to ensure that the workers were treated fairly (which would not be the case in all our Caribbean territories, if any) while at the same time in fact the state did not use the opportunity to expropriate.

There was another case where the owner of a restaurant refused to honour a settlement and the workers then continued to operate the restaurant as a co-operative. The owner disappeared from the scene, the landlord said "I want possession of my property" but such was the atmosphere that the landlord couldn't do anything about it. Eventually the co-operative department assisted the workers in setting up a proper co-operative and, with some assistance from the Attorney General's department, finally arrived at a new lease from the owner direct to the co-operative. So generally speaking in a delightfully informal way sometimes the state was there to give some protection and assistance to the workers even though it was operating this national alliance. There was one other case – the Bata strike. Bata was totally recalcitrant. In some countries this Trans-National Company opposes trade unionism altogether. In others they compromise, and operate with unionized workers, but in this particular case no progress could be made in a characteristically Grenadian development called profit-sharing. Union after union in workplace after workplace negotia-

ted a new contract in which a clause was inserted to ensure that the workers got a percentage of the profits. To Bata that was anathema. They said "No" and the property was closed down for a considerable time.

Notice was then given that if the strike was not settled within a reasonable period, the union would regard the property as having been abandoned and so inform the People's Revolutionary Government. At that stage, the manager did not wait to find out exactly what that implied and settlement was arrived at within a week. But this is more a reflection of the atmosphere of the society where the manager realized that the state was likely to find some formula by which production would be ensured and the workers' rights protected, and that a valuable enterprise could not simply be closed down because the owner couldn't arrive at a settlement with the workers.

### PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY

The transition from a neo-colonial government to a revolutionary government began with the suspension of the 1973 constitution, and, there was therefore, no functioning elective legislature, the method of legislating was by proclamation in cabinet. And paradoxically, the level of public participation in Grenada was much higher in spite of this; despite the fact that the legislation was not being debated in a parliamentary form.

All legislative matters were submitted, before proclamation or acceptance by cabinet, to public discussion. And this went on through organizations originally called parish councils where everybody in the parish was able to attend. When these got too large and unwieldy they were broken down by subdivisions into zonal councils in some parishes and they were actually beginning to move to a further subdivision of village councils when the democratic process was so rudely interrupted by the US invasion.

There were also the mass organizations – the National Women's Organization, the National Youth Organization, the trade unions and the Productive Farmers' Union where anything like this was submitted for discussion and the products of the discussion forwarded to the Cabinet before action was actually taken.

One of the developments in the economy was a boom in the export of fruits, vegetables and root crops to the Trinidad market. Every week on Tuesday you saw schooners lined up and loading food

bound for Trinidad. This, unfortunately, was accompanied by a boom in praedial larceny – the stealing of growing crops – because it was so easy to take your neighbour's crops and market them directly at the Ca enage where the schooners were berthed.

Unfortunately, this was becoming very prevalent. The farmers were up in arms; they were demanding that the government put a stop to this anti-social behavior of the thieves. Some of the peoples' angry demands were a bit barbaric. On one occasion a lady farmer stood up and demanded that the thief when caught should be branded with the word "Thief" across the face, and she was a little impatient with the explanations that this was a humane government which preferred not to engage in such barbarities. The government, therefore, had to do something, but what? The Minister came up with the proposal that for this particular offense, the Magistrate's Courts should be bypassed. The problem about the Magistrate's Courts is that the accused would have his case represented by a lawyer; there would be numerous adjournments; the farmer would have to lose his working day to go to court, and then the witnesses would scatter and not appear.

The farmers were absolutely fed up with those limping and cumbersome procedures. So the following idea was proposed. "Let's set up tribunals of local people who can, when such an offense occurs, try it on spot themselves and in times that suit the farmer after his working day and close by in the local schoolroom or church hall and then you will get your quick justice." But after centuries of brain-washing our Caribbean people continue to believe that authority comes from above or at least from outside. It doesn't reside in ourselves and there was quite a conservative reaction among many farmers who were rather shocked at the idea of taking initiatives and making decisions for themselves. Therefore after a round of discussions in which the minister and others went to meetings in all the areas involved, this reaction came up in several areas – an interesting contradiction – the desire to treat the offender with the utmost brutality but then somebody else must do it, not they themselves. The response to this proposal was therefore discouraging, but as it was an important matter, it had to go to the people for their opinion, it couldn't just be proclaimed by the revolutionary government.

The Attorney General was summoned by the Minister to talk about it, and he asked him: "Well, Minister, is that the end of it?" And he said, "No, no, no. This is early days." He said, "This is a shocking

idea to many people, but the real discussion is going to take place after those meetings and there'll be a second round of meetings. What I want you to do is come up with a draft taking into account the expressions of opinion and the second round of meetings will take place on the basis of the draft." The Attorney General then proceeded cautiously to prepare the first draft. The minister would proclaim an area a special one where the offense was particularly prevalent and where he felt that he could find a panel of citizens with a good chairman, and a good president to hear the matter. The second point was that all that the local tribunal would do would be to try and decide whether the man or woman was innocent or guilty. If they decided that he or she was guilty, then the accused would be taken into custody and sent to the magistrate for sentence, the sentence being prescribed by law. This compromise proposal didn't go as far as the original idea but did go some way towards solving the problem of justice and the peoples' sensibilities.

### ECONOMIC PROGRESS

The overall achievements in the Grenadian economy by the PRG were remarkable. Economic growth was consistent and in fact, in 1982, the final year for which figures are available, 5.5% growth was achieved. This was better than any other country in the hemisphere and the pattern of growth had been consistent for four years. Another point is that they were lowering unemployment dramatically, and had got it down to approximately 14% of the labour force. That might on the surface, seem alarmingly high. It is the sort of figure that puts European countries into a tizzy, but for the Caribbean 14% was a giant step forward. Unemployment in much of this region outside of Cuba, has averaged close to 30% for most of this century.

There would have been problems because when the new airport was completed, the Pearls Airport district in St. Andrews would have suffered a decline but they did have hopes of creating some other alternative source of employment. And they balanced their budget which probably startles all non-socialist economists, since this is a source of constant worry for them; and the percentage of the Grenadian Gross Domestic Product which went into repayments of debts was only 3%. The current figure for Brazil is close to 40% and the Jamaican figure is approximately 27%. Since the US invasion unem-

ployment has soared to around 40% and beggars and prostitutes now festoon the capital St. George's.

The facts of the October 1983 crisis reveal to us the unbelievable political myopia of the Coard faction. The New Jewel Movement, the PRG and the hopes of millions of Caribbean people were shattered because members of the Central Committee were willing to cling to rules unto death. In short, they allowed themselves to wallow in pools of self-deception. For them, rules, somehow, became biblical canons. And behind all this a power struggle was being masterminded by an individual who like Iago, in Shakespeare's "Othello", had developed intrigue into a malevolent and destructive art.

Those ardent adherents to rules who had set up cliques within cliques, factions within factions, and who had tried to disguise personal vendettas and personal ambitions behind a smokescreen of slogans, need to be seen for what they really were – a special breed of colonial petty bourgeois conspirators. They kept their conspiracy against Bishop and the Grenadian people so secret that none of the fraternal parties had a clue about what was going on behind the scenes. If they deserve any credit, it should be accorded to them for the imperishable model they left us of what should not be done in the future. Those factions and cliques are not and never were the Marxist Leninists they touted themselves to be, they were, in fact, victims of a crippling and tenacious colonial heritage of psychological dependence. They clung to rules with a passion bordering on idolatry. They saw those rules as eternal biblical truths in a catechism of revolution, and mistakenly believed that by clinging to them the way chitons cling to rocks in a storm, they could rush towards socialism. The PRG was grappling with a backward colonial heritage capped by decades of neocolonialism under Gairy. There was also the fact, and Bishop seemed to have appreciated this more than his enemies in the NJM had done, that the PRG had to rely, perhaps for a generation or longer, on an endemically lazy, corrupt and obstructive colonial civil service. No revolutionary incantations and responses to rules and regulations could have provided instant solutions to Grenada's problems. Tales are already being mooted about how the American occupation forces are being seriously frustrated by that very civil service. The British colonialists left it like a blight to haunt and frustrate those who followed in their wake.

The level of political consciousness of those members of the Cen-

tral Committee of the NJM who opposed Bishop left much to be desired. They were self-righteous when they needed to be humble and they displayed, somehow, all of the worst attributes of new converts to marxism – they mouthed the slogans without striving constantly to understand the content. Finally, in the midst of slogans whose inner meaning had eluded them, they acted as though they were playing at parish politics and allowed parochial and personal animosities to obscure the wider political realities. They seemed blithely unaware of the fact that after President Reagan had trumpeted the fiction that the PRG under Bishop posed a “threat” to the United States, the next step would be to create a pretext for an invasion. The result of that lamentable political myopia was that the revolution was truncated, the only leader capable of rallying the majority of Grenadians to resist a foreign invasion was murdered and lawless elements inside the army were allowed to turn their guns upon the people. For a glorious moment, the entire people had risen up to free Bishop and to put the revolution on track once more. When assassins thwarted this heroic upsurge, the traumatized people were set upon by invaders. That faction which had been hounding down the supporters of Bishop so vigorously, (and those supporters included the majority of Grenadians) then turned around and appealed to the very people they had so cruelly brutalized to rise up against the U.S. imperialists and their surrogates. But they had already, as Don Rojas had said, “Handed the revolution over to the imperialists on a platter with all the trimmings.”

Those mistakes have cost the Grenadian and Caribbean people dearly, but out of the ashes of the invasion, new and indomitable forces are already arising.

## POSTSCRIPT

### GRENADA

1.

*down this alien geography of blood  
this hemisphere languishing in lies*

*told*

*to hide all the genocide  
the Americas mean*

*to those without guns*

*Amerindians*

*Africans*

*Toilers*

*all the "niggers" of space*

*repeatedly done in*

*quelled*

*subdued*

*pacified*

*in order for the glib illusion  
of progress to pass into mythology:  
Civilization, Greatness, Democracy,  
Freedom . . .*

2.

*i lift my time from scattering bones  
this place  
this shrinking void suctioning in goodness*

*i lift my dreams to life  
and survive the roads of terror*

*nameless and cursed by desire  
by those bent on robbing.*

*i rise  
i rise  
i rise*

*up through the puke and heels  
of history*

*a flower perfuming the seasons*

*3.*

*yet the unprovoked envy of power  
wants the aroma of my halo*

*and sends its Marines  
to crush the petals of my spirits*

*to amputate the stems of my pride  
to burn the greenness from my roots*

*down this alien geography of blood  
this hemisphere languishing in lies*

*still  
they tell lies  
to hide all the genocide  
the Americas mean*

*to those without guns*

*still  
they envy the height of my uplifted palms  
they despise the glow of my maturation  
and send in their destroyers  
to mow me down*

*yet  
i fight and fight and fight  
and rise  
up through their thunder*

Sterling D. Plumpp, November 1, 1983

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<sup>5</sup> Grenada, C. O. Despatch "Immigration", to Lieutenant Governor Dundas from J. W. Hurley, 14th October, 1878

<sup>6</sup> Grenada, **St. George's Chronicle**, March 29, 1862

<sup>7</sup> George Brizan, op. cit., pp. 126-127

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 171

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Grenada Despatch No. 89 of 1854. Keate to Colebrooke, "Report on the Appearance and Progress of Cholera in Grenada", 6th October, 1854

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> George Brizan, op. cit., p. 178

<sup>16</sup> Grenada Despatch, op. cit., "Enclosure No. 3 in Despatch, No. 39"

<sup>17</sup> George Brizan, op. cit., pp. 179-180

### Chapter Thirteen:

<sup>1</sup> Chris Searle, **Grenada: The Struggle Against Destabilization** (London: Readers and Writers, 1983)

### Chapter Fourteen:

<sup>1</sup> George Brizan, **Children of Camerhogne: From Carib's Leap to People's Revolution** (Unpublished manuscript) p. 298

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. p. 300

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> William Shakespeare, **Julius Caesar**

## Chapter Fifteen:

- <sup>1</sup> Chris Searle, **Grenada: The Struggle Against Destabilization** (London: Readers & Writers, 1983)
- <sup>2</sup> Edgar Mittelholzer, **Creole Chips**, out of print
- <sup>3</sup> Edgar Mittelholzer, **His Majesty's Serfs**. The manuscript for this book was allegedly destroyed by the author.
- <sup>4</sup> Horace Campbell, "The American Invasion of Grenada & The Struggle in the Caribbean", in **Black Scholar**, vol. 15, No. 1 (Jan–Feb, 1984), p. 3

## Chapter Sixteen:

- <sup>1</sup> George Brizan, **Children of Camerhogne: From Carib's Leap to People's Revolution** (Unpublished manuscript) p. 306
- <sup>2</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>3</sup> Ibid. p. 307
- <sup>4</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>5</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>6</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 308
- <sup>8</sup> Grenada, **Reports of the Labour Department, 1958–68**
- <sup>9</sup> Private communication

## Chapter Seventeen:

- <sup>1</sup> Grenada, **Minutes of a Meeting at Government House on Wednesday 15th March, 1951**
- <sup>2</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>3</sup> George Brizan, **The Children of Camerhogne: From Carib's Leap to People's Revolution** (Unpublished manuscript) p. 256
- <sup>4</sup> Telegram from Governor of Grenada to Secretary of State, 16th March, 1951
- <sup>5</sup> **Grenada Disturbances**, Report of the Governor to the Colonial Office, No. 117, 5th April, 1951
- <sup>6</sup> **Grenada Disturbances**, Appendix. xiv "Minutes of a Meeting Held in the Market Square, St. George's by E. M. Gairy, on Thursday, 15th March, 1951"
- <sup>7</sup> George Brizan, op. cit., p. 257
- <sup>8</sup> Chris Searle, **Grenada: The Struggle Against Destabilization** (London: Readers & Writers, 1983)
- <sup>9</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>10</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>11</sup> Horace Campbell, "The American Invasion of Grenada & The Struggle in the Caribbean", in **Black Scholar**, vol. 15, No. 1 (Jan–Feb, 1984) p. 3

## Chapter Eighteen:

- <sup>1</sup> George Brizan, **The Children of Camerhogne: From Carib's Leap to People's Revolution** (Unpublished manuscript) p. 355a
- <sup>2</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>3</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 356
- <sup>5</sup> 'bubul' – a Trinidadian creole word for bribes.
- <sup>6</sup> George Brizan, op. cit., pp. 357–360
- <sup>7</sup> Chris Searle, **Grenada: The Struggle Against Destabilization** (London: Readers & Writers, 1983)
- <sup>8</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>9</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>10</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>11</sup> Ibid.

## Chapter Nineteen:

- <sup>1</sup> Chris Searle, **Grenada: The Struggle Against Destabilization** (London: Readers & Writers, 1983)
- <sup>2</sup> Linus Hoskins, "U. S. – Caribbean – Grenada Relations: Before and After Bishop", essay
- <sup>3</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>4</sup> Chris Searle, op. cit.

## Chapter Twenty:

- <sup>1</sup> As this testimony is quite lengthy, the first part is presented as a regular part of the text, and the second part is single-spaced.

Jan Carew

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Brief Biographical Sketch of Jan Carew



Born in Guyana, South America, 60 years ago, Professor Jan Carew, historian, journalist, novelist, poet and playwright has, through his work, distinguished himself as one of the Caribbean leading intellectuals and staunch defenders of its cultural sovereignty and historical legacy. At present he teaches at Northwestern University in the United States and is the current President of the Caribbean Studies Association. He is also a leading member of the Black Press Institute of Chicago and a regular contributor to internationally-renowned journals and magazines. He has authored a number of books and plays which have been translated into several languages and staged in a number of countries.